

REBUKE
TO THE
INFORMERS:

WITH
A PLEA for the Ministers of the Gospel,
CALLED

Nonconformists,
AND THEIR
MEETINGS.
AND

Advice to those to whom these INFORMERS
Address themselves for Assistance in their Undertakings.

OWEN STUBBS

Prov. 28. 23. He that rebuketh a man, afterward shall find more favour, than he that flattereth with his tongue.

Acts 28. 30, 31. Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.

Joh. 20. 17. Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut, for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

Act. 9. 4, 5. Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, who art thou Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

THE
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To the READER.

THE Design of this ensuing Discourse, is to convince and convert from the evil of their ways, those men that have taken upon them the work and office of Informers; and also to keep others from being partakers of their sins. By Informers, I mean such persons as under a pretence of suppressing seditious Conventicles, do create much disturbance to men fearing God, causing their Assemblies to be broken up, and the persons whom they find assembled together to be fined; although they can prove no crime against them, but that they find them praying to God in the Name of Jesus Christ, and preaching and hearing Gods holy word. Which practice of theirs seems to me, to be exceeding sinful, and greatly prejudicial to their own and others eternal Salvation, of which I have given several demonstrations, and have answered their most material Plea's that did come to my thoughts, whereby they seek to excuse and extenuate their sin.

If any say, these Informers are so hardened in their sinful ways, that there's no hope that they should be brought to repentance, and therefore you might have spared your labour in endeavouring to reclaim them.

I answer, 1. There is hope that the worst of men may be brought to repentance, even such as are slaves to Satan, and are taken and led captive by him at his will; and therefore such as are grown to that height of sin, as to oppose the truth, are to be instructed with meekness, as not knowing but God may give them repentance unto life. 2 Tim. 2. 25, 26. In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth. And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of

the Devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

2. *God can do great things by weak and unlikely means, to still and quiet those that are enemies to, and afflictors of his people.* Psal. 8. 2. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength, because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger. *Ultiores vocat illos, qui laedunt eos qui fidunt Deo. Vatabl.*

3. *If any one of these Informers, that are sprung up in any part of this Nation, should be brought to repentance, though the rest should perish in their evil courses; I should think my pains well bestowed, for the conversion of one sinner from the error of his ways. For one soul is of more worth than the whole world, Mark 8. 36. And one sinner destroyeth much good, Eccles. 9. 18. Not only several persons, but Towns, yea Countries may enjoy peace by the conversion of one Informer. For some of them are such turbulent persons, that they do not only disquiet their neighbours that live in the same Towns with themselves, but they go from one Town to another, and from one County to another, raising persecution against those that meet together in a peaceable manner, to pray to God in the name of Jesus Christ, and to preach and hear his holy word. When Saul, who was a great persecutor of the servants of Christ, was converted; several Churches had rest and peace thereby. Act. 9. 31. Then had the Churches rest through all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied. What great benefits accrued to several Churches by the conversion but of one persecutor, who had been an active man in persecuting the members of Christ? The rest, the edification, the multiplying, the spiritual comfort of the churches in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, followed upon the conversion of Saul.*

4. If none that are actually engaged in this way of being Informers should be reclaimed, yet by opening the horrible and dangerous nature of their sin, others that are or may be hereafter under a temptation to turn Informers, being tempted thereto by poverty, enticing of evil minded men, promise of a reward, affrighted by threatnings, or any other way; may be prevented from following their pernicious ways. They are more foolish than the birds, that will be allured to take the bait, when they espy the net. Prov. 1.17. Surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird.

5. If none should receive any benefit by what I have written, yet by warning those that are engaged in this sinful practice to turn from their evil ways, and warning others not to be partakers of their evil deeds; I shall deliver my own soul. Ezek. 3. 19. If thou warn the wicked man, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way; he shall dye in his iniquity, but thou hast delivered thy soul.

But some may say, These papers are not like to come into the Informers hands; or if they should, they will not bestow the pains to read them; or if they should, they will but make a scoff at them; or they will be but the more enraged; and therefore it is to no effect that this means should be used to reclaim them.

Ans. 1. We must do our duty, and leave the success to God. Eccl. 11. 6. In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, this, or the other; or both be alike good. I leave it wholly to the providence of God, what success he will give to my endeavours. It may be he will put it into the hearts of some persons that compassionate the perishing condition of these Informers, to send these papers to them; and it may be he will move their hearts to read them, and who can tell but he may touch their hearts in reading them, and cause some of the arrows drawn out of his quiver to stick so fast in their consciences, as they shall not be able to shake them off.

2. *Writing as well as preaching is a means to bring sinners to repentance.* Jer. 36. 2. Take thee the roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee, against Israel and against Judah, and against all the nations. It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them, that they may return every man from his evil way; that I may forgive them their iniquity and their sin. *I observe here;*

1. *Jeremiah had no assurance that the Jews would read or hear what he wrote; there was only a probability of it.* It may be the house of Judah will hear. Yet he was commanded to write in a book the judgments of God that hung over their heads for their sins.

2. *When Jeremiah was hindered from preaching, as he formerly had done; ver. 5. I am shut up, I cannot go into the house of the Lord. God prescribed this way as the most likely means to bring them to repentance, for Jeremiah to write unto the Jews.* Write all these words, that I have spoken to thee against Judah. It may be the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them, that they may return every man from his evil way.

3. *Though these Informers should not hearken to the counsel that I have given them; yet whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, it is the mind and will of God, that sinners should be called to repentance.* Ezek. 2. 7. And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, for they are most rebellious.

4. *Scorning is a great sin, and bringeth down mighty judgments.* Prov. 19. 29. Judgments are prepared for scorers, Jer. 22. 28. Now therefore be ye not mockers, lest your hands be made strong. Yet though these Informers should prove scorers, we must not conclude their case desperate, but use means to bring them to repentance; both reproving them for their sin, and letting them see there is mercy for them, if they will turn when they are reproved for their sins.

Prov.

Prov. 1. 22, 23. How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity; and the scorers delight in scorning, and fools hate knowledg! Turn at my reproof; behold I will pour out my spirit upon you, I will make known my words unto you. *But if they will persist in their sins, and scorn those means that are used to bring them to repentance, their scorning will not hurt me, but themselves.* Prov. 9. 12. If thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it. *And let such persons consider what is said,* Prov. 3. 34. Surely he scorneth the scorers. *And* Prov. 1. 24. to the 32.

5. *If none of these Informers should vouchsafe to read what I have written for the convincing them of their sin; yet it may fall into the hands of their friends and relations, and they may hereby be put upon mourning and praying for them, and endeavouring their conversion.*

6. *As for their being enraged at what I have written; I shall reply,* 1. Our Lord Jesus spake nothing but the truth; yet many of the Jews were so incensed against him, that they would have thrown him down headlong from an high hill. Luk. 4. 28, 29. And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust him out of the City, and led him unto the brow of the hill, whereon their City was built, that they might cast him down headlong. *Yet he did not forbear reproving them for their sins; though he was hated by the world on this very account, for testifying that the deeds thereof were evil.* Joh. 7. 7. The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the deeds thereof are evil. *Yea, though their hatred arose to such an height, as that they went about to kill him, yet he taught them and reprov'd them for their sins.* v. 14, 19. Now about the midst of the feast, Jesus went into the Temple, and taught, none of you keepeth the law, why go ye about to kill me? Joh. 8. 40. And now ye seek to kill me, a man which hath told you the truth. 2. *If God shall touch any one of their hearts, and reclaim them*
from

from their evil ways, instead of being enraged, they will bless God, and be thankful to them whom God makes instruments of keeping them from sin. When David was kept by Abigails advice from shedding of blood, he was thankful to God for putting it into Abigails heart to come to him, and thankful to her for her good counsel. 1 Sam. 25. 32, 33. And David said to Abigail, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me; and blessed be thy advice; and blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging my self with mine own hand. Nabal was a son of Belial, who had requited David evil for good. To be kept from persecuting the servants of God, is as great a favour as to be kept from avenging a mans self on a son of Belial: And if David was so thankful to God the author, and Abigail the instrument of his preservation from sin; why should not these men, in stead of railing and fretting, say in their hearts, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, that sent this man to shew us our sin, and blessed be he, and blessed be his advice?

To prevent mistakes, and the uncharitable censures that some may be ready to pass upon this ensuing discourse, I do freely and sincerely declare, that I have no design to take off any Magistrate, Officer, or any other persons, from using all due care and diligence to prevent tumults and Insurrections; but only to lay open the greatness, and prevent the growth of their sin, who under a pretence of preventing seditious Meetings, do suppress religious Exercises. The discovery of the folly of these men and their practices, being a likely means to put a stop to their sinful proceedings, as the Apostle speaks of those that resist the truth. 2 Tim. 3. 9. But they shall proceed no further, for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was.

CHAP. I.

THere are certain men risen up in this Nation, called *INFORMERS*, whose transgression saith within my heart, that they are wandred out of the path of life, and are going on apace in the broad way that leads to destruction. I have not only heard of them, but I have met with some of them in the very act of their sin. When I had considered their ways, I thought my self obliged to endeavour the turning them from their sinful courses. For I find in the Law of *Moses*, a strict charge given to him that meeteth his Neighbours Ox or Ass going astray, to bring it back, though his Neighbour be his enemy, *Exod. 23. 4. If thou meetest thine enemies Oxe or his Ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again.* It is a greater act of Charity to bring back a sinner that is gone astray from God, than to bring back an Oxe or an Ass of our enemies, that was gone astray from him. And we are under stronger obligations to endeavour the conversion of a sinner, than to bring back the straying Oxe or Ass of an enemy, on several accounts. For,

1. The Soul of a man is of more worth than all the Oxen and Asses upon the face of the earth; yea the Soul of the meanest man is of greater value than the whole world, *Mark 8. 35. What shall it profit a man to gain the whole world, and lose his own soul.*

2. It is far more dangerous for a sinner to go astray from God, than an Oxe or an Ass to go astray from his owner. For the Oxe that goeth from one Master, may find another that may take care of it; or the Oxe may get a subsistence by ranging abroad, as well as abiding at home; or if the straying Oxe should be slain, its misery endeth with its life: But the sinner that goeth astray from God, unless he be brought to repentance, will fall into the Lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, and will perish eternally.

3. God hath a greater right to the Souls of men, than any man hath to his Oxen or Asses, *Ezek. 18. 4. All souls are mine.* They are the work of his hands, and therefore he may claim a greater propriety in them, than any man can in those things which he hath bought with his money, or calls his own on the account of any other title.

4. We are more obliged to bring unto God (who is our Sovereign Lord, our heavenly Father, our dearest Friend) that which is his own, when gone astray from him, than we are to bring back to our enemy his Oxe or his Ass when we meet it going astray. If then he that meeteth his enemies Oxe or Ass going astray, be under a strict charge to bring it

back, *Thou shalt surely bring it back to him again*; how much more are we obliged to endeavour the conversion of a sinner, when we meet him going astray from God, though he be one of the greatest enemies we have in the world?

When I had considered not only the swift destruction these *Informers* bring upon their own Souls, but also what mischief they have already done, and may further do unto men fearing God, if not reclaimed; how many they draw to be partakers with them in their sin; what temptations needy and malicious men may be under to follow their pernicious ways; what great guilt is brought upon the Nation by their means; I thought with my self, that the leading these men to repentance would conduce to a publick good, as well as be an act of kindness to their own Souls, and so was the more confirmed in my resolution to endeavour the converting them from the error of their ways.

The most effectual way to reclaim these men from their evil ways seems to me to be this; To demonstrate out of the word of God the greatness and the dangerous nature of this sin, which I conceive they either know not, or at least do not consider it. For that is the most powerful means that can be used for converting a sinner, *Psal. 19. 7. The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.* If the word of God will not prevail with them to turn from their evil ways, though one should arise from the dead, either one of the Saints, that hath been in heaven, and should tell them what a glorious Kingdom they shall lose, if they persist in their sins; or one of their fellow sinners should come out of hell, and tell them what torments they have felt in that Lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, and they will certainly come into that place of torment, if they go on in their evil ways; yet this would not persuade them to repent. *Luk. 16. 29, 30, 31. They have Moses and the Prophets, let them hear them. And he said, nay father Abraham, but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.*

For my more orderly proceeding with these men, I shall use this method:

1. I shall shew what *Informers* I mean and aim at in this Discourse.
2. I shall premise something concerning the persons whom they molest, and the work for which they molest them.
3. I shall by several arguments endeavour to convince them of the greatness of their sin.
4. I shall answer their Plea's, whereby they excuse their sin.
5. I shall draw some Inferences for their and others instruction.

The *Informers* I design in this Discourse to convince of the evil of their ways, are such as either for the love of money, or out of malice, or a blind zeal, or any other evil principle, under a pretence of suppressing seditious Conventicles, go to the Assemblies where those Ministers (commonly called *Nonconformists*) do pray to God in the Name of Jesus Christ, and do read the holy Scriptures, and preach the Gospel; and if they find them either Praying or Preaching, they procure Officers to break up their Assemblies, or else they go to the Magistrates, and by the Information they

they give against those present at the foresaid Assemblies, they stir them up either to imprison the Minister, or to fine him, or such of the people as they think good, in great sums of money.

The reason why I deal with these *Informers* only that come to, and raise up trouble against these Assemblies, where those Ministers called *Nonconformists*, pray to God, and instruct the people, are these :

1. I have observed, that their chief design and endeavour hath been to molest those Meetings.

2. I have no knowledg what is said or done at other Meetings, as never to my remembrance having been present at any of them, and therefore will not justify nor condemn them ; but shall leave that to those that are concerned therein.

In order to the conviction of these *Informers* of the evil of their ways, I shall premise three Propositions :

1. Those Ministers whom they persecute, are righteous men, and there are many righteous persons that frequent their Assemblies.

2. Praying and preaching, which are the works for which they are persecuted, are good works.

3. These Ministers that are persecuted by these *Informers* for praying and preaching, are true Ministers of Jesus Christ, and are called of God to preach the Gospel. I shall briefly prove these three Propositions.

1. These Ministers whom these *Informers* persecute, are righteous men ; to evidence this, consider :

1. They are found in the Faith, they believe all things that are written by the Prophets and Apostles. They imbrace that Faith which is professed in the Protestant Churches ; and particularly, they own the established Doctrine of the Church of *England*, although they have different apprehensions about the Discipline. Soundness in the Faith is requisite to make a man a righteous man (although that alone be not sufficient) ; for Heresie is a work of the flesh, which will shut a man out of the Kingdom of heaven, as well as Idolatry, Adultery, Drunkenness, or such like sins, *Gal. 5. 19, 20, 21.*

2. They are righteous men in Gods account, who walk in all his Ordinances, and all his Commandments in a blameless manner, *Luk. 1. 6.* They were both righteous before God, walking in all the Commandments and Ordinances of the Lord blameless. That evidence which is given of the righteousness of *Zacharias* and *Elizabeth*, may be given of these men, they walk in all the Ordinances of God, they have respect to all the Commandments of God, and are blameless in their conversations. They are baptized, and baptize others in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ; they often celebrate the Lords Supper ; they praise God in singing Psalms ; they keep holy the Sabbath day ; they pray to God in secret, and pray in their Families, they worship God in publick Assemblies, as well as privately ; they are just, sober, temperate, patient under afflictions, &c.

3. They visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction, and they keep themselves unsupported of the world, and they that do so (being sound in the Faith) are Religious men, and their Religion is pure

and undefiled in the sight of God, *Jam. 1. 27. Part Religion, and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widow in their affliction, and to keep himself unpolluted from the world. They endeavour according to their abilities and their opportunities, to do good unto all men; And that is an argument, that they are born of God, 2 Joh. v. 11. He that doth good is of God.*

4. They train up their children and servants in the knowledge and the fear of the Lord, and that is an evidence of a righteous man; when he doth not only serve God, and walk with God himself, but teacheth his household to do so also, *Joh. 24. 15. As for me and my house we will serve the Lord. Cornelius his piety was evidenced by training up his house in the fear of God, Act. 10. 2. A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house. God takes special notice of Abrahams piety, in that he was careful that his children and his whole house should keep the ways of the Lord, Gen. 18. 19. I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgement, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.*

If it be said, Some think and speak otherwise of these Ministers which are called *Nonconformists*, as if they were deceivers of the people, and were not good men.

I answer: 1. So did many among the *Jews* say of Christ and his Apostles. Amongst the *Jews* there were differing thoughts concerning Jesus Christ, *Joh. 7. 12. Some said he is a good man; others said, nay, but he deceiveth the people. There were as evil reports raised, and as dishonourable speeches given out against the Apostles, as there are against these men, 2 Cor. 6. 8. By honour and dishonour, by evil and good report, as deceivers and yet true.*

2. The Spirit of God foresaw that scandalous reports would be raised against righteous men; and that they would be misrepresented in the world, whereby many would be deceived, and be ready to condemn the innocent; and therefore he hath given us a sure rule to judge who is a righteous man; He that doth righteousness, he is a righteous man, *1 Joh. 3. 7. Little children, let no man deceive you; he that doth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. These men approve themselves to be righteous men by their constant care to do those things which are just and right in the sight of God and men.*

3. Their adversaries that reproach them, would be glad to be in their condition when they dye; then they will wish, that their last end may be like theirs.

If any say, Do you know all those Ministers which are called *Nonconformists*, that you know them to be righteous men?

I answer; 1. With some of them I have had intimate acquaintance for several years, and have fully known their Doctrine and manner of life, and I am abundantly satisfied in what I have asserted, that they are men of sound judgments, of upright, holy, and exemplary conversations. And Charity obligeth me to believe and hope the like of the rest, although I have no personal acquaintance with them.

2. If any Minister that goeth under the name of a *Nonconformist* be not a righteous man; I plead not his cause, but dislike and disown such a man as much as the *conformists* do. And

And as these Ministers are righteous men, so there are many of those that come to their Assemblies; I say not that they are all righteous that come to their Meetings (for the Gospel is like a Net, which draweth good and bad); but this I say, there are many righteous persons come to their Assemblies, such as are of an holy blameless conversation, well reported of for good works, who have no other design in frequenting these Meetings, than the glorifying God and the saving their own souls.

2. Praying to God in the Name of Jesus Christ for things agreeable to his will, and Preaching and Hearing of Gods Word, are good works. Prayer is a good work, 1 Tim. 2. 1, 2, 3. *I exhort therefore, that first of all, supplication, prayer, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men; for Kings, and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty, for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour.*

1. It is commanded of God, 1. 8. *I will therefore, that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.* These words may relate to verse 3, where the Apostle had told us, that praying for all men is good and acceptable in the sight of God. And therefore commands that men pray every-where.

2. Prayer, when made by upright men, is delightful to God, Prov. 15. 3. *The prayer of the upright is his delight.*

3. God promiseth great blessings to them that pray to him, as eternal life, Rom. 10. 13. *Whosoever calleth upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved.* The giving of the Holy Ghost, Luk. 11. 13. *Your heavenly Father will give the holy Spirit to them that ask him.* Yea all good things, Psal. 31. 10. *Tory that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.*

And as Praying, so Preaching of the Gospel is a good work: For,

1. It is commanded by God, Mark 16. 15. *Go ye into all the world, preach the Gospel to every creature.*

2. It doth great good to the souls of men. It turns them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God. It is the great instrument of saving mens souls, even that preaching which the world counteth foolishness, 1 Cor. 1. 20. *It pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.*

3. God promiseth to reward this work with a Crown of glory, 1 Pet. 5. 1, 2, 4. *The Elders which are among you I exhort; Feed the flock of God, which is among you. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a Crown of glory, which fadeth not away.*

As Preaching, so Hearing the Word is a good work: For,

1. It is commanded of God, Jam. 1. 19. *Let every one be swift to hear.*

2. It hath the promise of life and salvation annexed to it, 44. 55. 3. *Hear and your soul shall live.*

3. By Hearing the Word of God we get great good for our souls. For hereby we get saving faith, Rom. 10. 17. *Faith cometh by hearing.* And have the Holy Ghost communicated to us, Act. 10. 44. *While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on them that heard him; with many other precious blessings.* And yet for these things are Ministers that preach and pray, and people that hear them, vexed and molested.

3. These

3. These Ministers are true Ministers of Jesus Christ; called of God to preach the Gospel. To prove this, consider:

1. They have the internal call, which consists in bestowing Ministerial abilities; and a willingness to serve the Lord in the work of the Ministry. Gods distribution of abilities is one branch of this call, *1 Cor. 7. 17. As God hath distributed, as God hath called every man.* Our Lord Jesus proves his Call to the Ministry, by being anointed with the Spirit, *Luk. 4. 18. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor.* These Ministers are endued with Ministerial abilities, and have those qualifications required by the Apostle in a Minister of the Gospel, *2 Tim. 2. 3, 4.* They are blameless, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach, not given to wine, no strikers, they rule their houses well, &c. The internal Call consists also in a willingness and desire, stirred up in the heart by the Spirit of God, to undertake this work and office of preaching the Gospel, *Deut. 18. 5, 6, 7.* In the 5th verse, *Moses* tells us, that of all the Tribes, God had chosen *Levi* to minister to him; and v. 7. he tells us which of the Sons of *Levi* were to be admitted to minister before the Lord, namely, *he that came with all the desire of his mind.* This willing mind to serve the Lord in the work of the Ministry, God hath given unto these men.

2. They have given up themselves unto the Lord, to serve him in the Gospel of his Son; and have been set apart for this work in a solemn manner by fasting and prayer, and most of them also with imposition of hands. And they that having the internal Call, are separated and set apart by fasting and prayer for the work of the Ministry, are sent out by God to preach the Gospel, *Act. 13. 2, 3, 4.* *The Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So they being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed.*

3. They prove themselves to be true Ministers of Jesus Christ by preaching the word of truth. There is nothing contrary to sound Doctrine in what they teach and preach unto the people. This was the way by which the Apostle proved himself a true Minister, by preaching the word of truth, *2 Cor. 6. 4. 7.* *But in all things approving your selves as the Ministers of God, by the word of truth.* And thus *John Baptist* proved Christ to be sent of God, because he preached Gods word, *Joh. 3. 34.* *For he whom God hath sent, speaketh the words of God.* Such as being separated to the work of the Ministry, do teach the truth, and preach sound Doctrine, are good Ministers of Jesus Christ, *1 Tim. 4. 6.* *If thou put the Brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good Minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and good doctrine, wherunto thou hast attained.*

4. God hath given evidence to the truth of their Call to the Ministry by the conversion of many souls. They have been instrumental to turn many souls from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God; and also to edifice and build up such as are converted. When there were some that questioned, whether *Paul* were a true Apostle; he proves himself to be a true Apostle, by the success God had given his Ministry in the conversion of the *Corinthians*, *1 Cor. 9. 1, 2.* *Am I not an Apostle? Are*

et you my work in the Lord? If I am not an Apostle to others, yet doubtless am unto you, for the seal of mine Apostleship are ye in the Lord.

5. The people that do feel the want of the word, and desire to be instructed in the way to life and salvation, do call upon them to preach the word to them. We read of Paul, that he concluded assuredly that God called him to preach the Gospel in Macedonia, because he saw a man in a vision calling to him, *Come over into Macedonia and help us*, *Act.* 16. 9, 10. There are multitudes of people that call out to these men, Come and help us. Why may they not thence assuredly gather, that the Lord hath called them to preach to them, being such as are duly qualified, and have been set apart for the work of the Ministry.

Obj. These men were not ordained to the work of the Ministry by the Bishops, and therefore are no true Ministers.

Ans. 1. The Ministers of the French and Dutch, and several other Reformed Churches, have no other Ordination than by Presbyters; yet are their Churches owned by most Protestants for true Churches, and their Ministers for true Ministers of Jesus Christ.

2. Many of the Nonconformists were ordained by Bishops, yet these Reformers prosecute them with as great fury as they do others, making no distinction between them.

3. Those whose cause I plead, that were not ordained by Bishops, were set apart to the work of the Ministry with fasting and prayer by the Elders of other Churches. And it is contrary to the judgment of many learned Bishops, and great Assertors of Episcopacy, to deny those to be true Ministers that were ordained by Presbyters, because they had not Episcopal Ordination. For divers instances might be given out of their Writings, whereby it appeareth they did allow Ordination by Presbyters to be valid and lawful; especially in such cases as Ordination could not be had by Bishops, and in *Ecclesiâ turbatâ*; which is the case of several of these Ministers, they were set apart to the work of the Ministry when Bishops were laid aside in the Nation, and when the Nation and Church were in great troubles. I will mention two or three. Archbishop Spotswood in his History of Scotland, lib. 7. p. 514. makes mention of three Bishops that came out of Scotland to be Consecrated in England; "when the time and place for the Consecration was agreed on, a Question in the mean time was moved by Dr. Andrews Bishop of Ely, touching the Consecration of the Scottish Bishops, who as he said must first be ordained Presbyters, as having received no Ordination from a Bishop. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Bancroft, who was by, maintained that thereof there was no necessity, seeing where Bishops could not be had, the Ordination given by the Presbyters must be esteemed lawful: Otherwise that it might be doubted, if there were any lawful vocation in most of the Reformed Churches. This applauded too by the other Bishops, Ely acquiesced, and at the day, and in the place appointed, the three Scottish Bishops were Consecrated: Dr. Prideaux who was Professor of Divinity in Oxford, and afterward a Bishop, hath this passage in his Disputations, *De Disciplina Ecclesiâ*; Presbyterum Presbyteros ordinare posse; presentim deficientibus Episcopis concessit cum Sententiarum Magistro senior Pars Scholasticorum. That a Presbyter

may Ordain Presbyters, especially where there are no Bishops, is granted by the Master of Sentences, and the founder part of the Schoolmen.

4. These Ministers were set apart to the work of the Ministry by the Elders of other Churches; and in Scripture a Bishop and an Elder are all one; so that they were Ordained by such as the Scripture calleth *Bishops*, though not by *Diocesan Bishops*. The clearing of this, that Bishops and Elders were all one in Scripture account, will I conceive give a full answer to this Objection. To this purpose let these Scriptures be well-weigh'd; *Act. 20. 17, 28. And from Miletus he sent and called the Elders of the Church of Ephesus. And speaking to these Elders he saith, Take heed to your selves, and to all the Flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you Overseers. The same persons whom he calls *ἐπισκοποι* in the 17th verse, he calls *πρεσβυτερος* in the 28th verse; whence it may be inferred, that Elders and Bishops are the same in Scripture-sense. So also, *Phil. 1. 1. Paul and Timothyus the servants of Iesus Christ, to all the Saints in Christ Iesus which are at Philippi, with Bishops and Deacons.* Parius observes in his Commentary on this place, That in the Apostles times, all the Ministers of the Gospel were called Bishops; because the Apostle mentions several Bishops as well as Deacons in one Church; and concludes, that though after-ages made a distinction, yet by Divine right and Apostolical practice a Bishop and Presbyter were all one. His words are these, *Apparet hinc tempore Apostolorum nomen Episcopi fuisse omnibus Evangelii doctoribus commune; quia plures uni Ecclesie Episcopos, uti & Diaconos tribuit Apostolus, Episcopos igitur & Presbyteri jure Divino & Apostolica consuetudine idem est.* Tit. 1. 5, 7. For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldst sit in order the things that are wanting, and ordain Elders in every City, as I appointed thee; and then ver. 6. he gives qualifications of an Elder, and then adds, ver. 7. For a Bishop must be blameless. Whom he calls an Elder in ver. 5. he calls a Bishop ver. 7. And if a Bishop and an Elder were not all one, what coherence would there be in the Apostles Discourse, to tell him he left him to ordain Elders in every City, and what manner of persons they must be; and then to add, for a Bishop must be blameless. And that this is no novel interpretation, I may produce several Authors. As judicious Calvin, *Lucus hic abunde docet; nullum esse Presbyteri & Episcopi discrimen.* Johan. Piscator. Schol. v. 7. *En hic nominat Episcopum, quem v. 5. nominaverat Presbyterum.* Hierome also, who was born about the year 342, and dyed about the year 420, gives in full and clear evidence to this; that in the time of the Apostles a Bishop and a Presbyter were all one. And Blondel hath written a large and learned Treatise to defend Hierome's assertion, *De primitiva Episcopis & Presbyteri identitate, seu veris rationibus*, concerning the equality, or more truly the identity of a Bishop and a Presbyter in the primitive times; wherein he proves, that Hierome did neither imprudently assert that which was inconsistent with truth; nor impudently affirm that which was contrary to the practice of the Church; nor misled by prejudice, affirm that which was contrary to the Scripture; by the testimony and practice of very learned men in several Ages of the Church. To whose elaborate Treatise, entitled, *Apologetica pro sententia Hieronimi de Episcopis & Presbyteris*; I refer the Reader for his further satisfaction. Besides the testimonies of particular persons, I might men-*

mention the judgment of whole Assemblies of learned and judicious men met together on purpose to debate matters of Religion, who have asserted the equality of power and authority between all the Ministers of the Gospel. As for instance; The confession of Faith compiled by the National Synod of the Reformed Churches in France in the year 1559. And confirmed by a National Synod, 1571. hath this passage. *Art. 30. Cridimus omnes veros pastores ubicunque locorum collocati fuerint, eadem & equali inter se potestate esse præditos sub unico illo capite, summoque & solo universali Episcopo Jesu Christo; ac proinde nulli Ecclesiæ licere sibi in aliam imperium aut dominationem vindicare.* The Synod of Dort in their Confession of Faith, published 1619. *Art. 31. Quantum vero attinet divini verbi Ministros, ubicunque locorum sunt, eandem illi potestatem & auctoritatem habent; ut qui omnes sunt Christi amici illius Episcopi universales, unicuique capitis Ecclesiæ Ministri.*

CHAP. II.

Arguments drawn out of the Scriptures to convince the Informers and their Adherents, of the evil of their ways.

THese things being premised, I shall now by several Arguments demonstrate the greatness and horrible nature of their Sin, who go to the Assemblies where these Ministers of Christ, called by the name of *Non-conformists*, do pray to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and preach the Gospel to them that are met together, and if they find them either praying or preaching, they procure Officers to interrupt them, while they are worshipping God, and cause their Assemblies to be broken; or else go and make Oath against them, and cause them to be fined in great sums of Money, and get out Warrants to Distrain and take away their Goods from them.

1. These Informers are guilty of persecuting righteous men for righteousness sake, and to persecute righteous men for righteousness sake, is an horrible Sin; which will appear evidently from several Scriptures. I will instance in three or four, *Matt. 23. 34, 35. Behold, I send unto you Prophets, and wisdom and Scribes, and some of them ye shall kill, and crucify, and some of them ye shall scourge in your Synagogues, and persecute them from City to City, that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel, unto the blood of Zacharias, whom ye slew between the Porch and the Altar.* Observe here, Persecution involves a man in the guilt of righteous blood, in the guilt of all the righteous blood that hath been shed upon the earth since the world stood, which, if it were well considered and believed, and laid to heart, were enough to fill the heart of these men with unspeakable horror. *Pf. 69. 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28. Let their Table be*

come a snare before them, and that which should have been for their welfare become a trap. Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not, and make their loins continually to shake. Pour out thine indignation upon them, and let thy wrathful anger take hold of them. Let their habitation be desolate, and let none dwell in their tents. For they persecute him whom thou hast smitten, and they talk to the grief of him, whom thou hast wounded. Add iniquity to their iniquity, and let them not come into thy righteousness. Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous. Observe here,

1. A Catalogue of dreadful curses, such as may make a mans ears tingle to hear of them.

2. The Persons against whom, and the cause for which they are denounced, and they are such as persecute the people of God, for this very Sin of persecution, *v. 26. For they persecute him, &c.*

3. The person that imprecates. or (as some) by a Spirit of Prophecy foretells what should befall Persecutors, and that was *David*, who in this Psalm, represents and personates our Lord Jesus: And so we may look upon it, as our Lord Jesus cursing, and foretelling what curses should come upon those that should persecute him and his members. Now let us consider what these curses are, which *David*, or rather our Lord Jesus foretells, should come upon Persecutors. Their blessings shall be cursed, *their table shall be their snare, and that which should have been their welfare become a trap, v. 22.* Their eyes shall be darkened, that is, they shall be smitten with spiritual blindness, and their loins shall shake continually; that is, they shall be as unable for any good work, as a man whose loins shake continually; or else a guilty Conscience shall make them shake for fear, even where no fear is, *v. 28.* God will pour out his indignation upon them; pouring out signifies the abundance of wrath, as when the clouds are said to pour down rain, it implies abundance of rain; and his wrathful anger shall take hold of them, it shall not only fall upon them but abide, and take such hold as they shall not get from it, *v. 24.* God will give them up to their hearts lusts, and punish this Sin by letting them go on in their Sins, by adding one Sin to another, which is a fore judgment. And will not let them come into his righteousness; that is, will let them dye in their Sins, will not let them partake of his mercy and favour, will not let them have any share of the righteousness of Christ, *v. 26.* They shall be cut off from the land of the living, and have no part with the righteous in the world to come, *v. 27.* God will visit their families and posterity with desolating judgments, *v. 25.* This shall be the portion of them that persecute the members of the Lord Jesus, if they continue in this Sin without repentance. See another Scripture, *Psa. 7. 13. He ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors.* And woe to those men against whom the great God, the Lord of Hosts, ordaineth his arrows. And whereas he saith not his Arrow, but he ordaineth his arrows against the Persecutors, it implyeth that God hath several sorts of judgments in store for Persecutors, both judgments in this life, and the life to come.

It may be you will say, we see Persecutors of righteous men are in a very dreadful condition, but we hope we are not guilty of this great Sin of persecution by our molesting these men in their meetings, and causing their goods:

goods to be taken from them. Did we hale them to Prisons, or cause them to be put to death, then we might justly be called Persecutors; but seeing we do not take away their lives, but their goods, we hope we are no Persecutors.

Ans. 1. All injuries done wittingly to righteous men, either in word or deed, especially when they are troubled for righteousness sake, are persecutions. *Ismael* did not offer any violence to the life, person, or estate of *Isaac*: He did but mock him, *Gen.* 21. 9. yet he is charged with persecuting *Isaac*. *Gal.* 4. 29. *But as then he that was born after the flesh, persecuted him that was born after the Spirit; even so it is now.* *Job's* friends did not afflict his body, nor touch his estate, nor disturb him at his devotion; only they grieved his Spirit by their reproaches, and uncharitable censures of him, and they are charged with the guilt of persecution. *Job.* 19. 21, 22. *Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, Oh ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me, why do ye persecute me, &c.* *David* speaking of his Persecutors, tells us one way whereby they persecuted him, was by talking and speaking those things which caused him grief. *P.* 69. 26. *They persecute him whom thou hast smitten, and talk to the grief of them, whom thou hast wounded.* If uncharitable censures, reproaches, scoffs, be a degree of persecution; how can you wash your hands from the guilt of this Sin, who call their meeting to worship God by reproachful terms, who disturb them in their devotions; carry them before Magistrates, and cause their goods to be taken from them?

2. Though you do not take one drop of blood from these men, yet if you hate them, and what you do to them proceed out of hatred; then are you Murderers in God's account, and shall have no inheritance in the Kingdom of God, *1 Job.* 3. 15. *Whoever hateth his Brother is a murderer, and you know no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.* As unchast lusts are adultery in God's account, and he that lusteth after a woman though he never touch her, hath committed adultery with her in his heart, *Mat.* 5. 28. So malicious actions are Murder, and he that hateth his brother, though he offer no violence to his life, hath murdered him in his heart: I will not charge you with hatred, I leave that to God, and your own Consciences; But this I will say, I cannot understand how your actions are consistent with love: *For love worketh no ill to his Neighbour,* *Rom.* 13. 10.

3. By taking away their livelyhood whereby their lives are preserved, you are guilty before God of taking away their lives; For a mans livelyhood is in Scripture accounted his life; else what means that Scripture, *Deut.* 24. 6. *No man shall take the nether or the upper millstone to pledge, for he taketh a mans life to pledge?* Why is the taking the upper or nether millstone to pledge, the taking a mans life to pledge; but because it is the taking that which is the means of preserving his life by procuring him a livelyhood?

4. By hindring them in the exercise of their Ministry, you take away that which is as dear to them as their lives, *Act.* 20. 24. *But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear to my self; so that I might finish my course with joy, and the Ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God.*

5. You have cause to fear lest a worse Sin than blood be laid to your charge.

charge. What's that? what is worse than blood? The loss and ruine of immortal Souls, who possibly might have obtained Salvation, had not you broken up the meetings where they went to attend, when now they may become a prey to erroneous persons, and be swallowed up of Satan, who goeth about like a roaring Lion seeking whom he may devour. Scattered sheep are in danger to be a prey to wild beasts: *Ezek. 34. 4, 5. With force and with cruelty ye have ruled them. And they were scattered, because there is no Shepherd, and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered.* And in the eighth and tenth Verses: The Lord swears by his life, that seeing his Flock was become a prey and meat to every beast of the field, he would require his Flock at their hands, that had been the cause of their scattering.

Obj. 2. But we do not look upon these as righteous men, if we did we would not molest them.

Ans. Though you do not, yet if God owns and accepts them as righteous, this will not excuse your Sin. I have in part answered this already, and shall do it more fully, *Ch. 3. Plea 1st.*

Obj. 3. We do not punish them for righteousness sake, but for keeping Conventicles, which is a thing we hate.

Ans. 1. The work you find them at when you come to their meetings, is Praying to God in the name of Jesus Christ, giving God thanks, Preaching and Hearing God's holy Word; and for these things you go and inform against them, and raise Persecution against them. What is, If this be not persecuting men for righteousness sake? For Praying, Preaching and Hearing the Word of God are Duties commanded by God; as was proved before. And God's commands are all righteousness, *Pf. 119. 72. All thy Commandments are righteousness.* So that when men are persecuted for these things that are commanded of God, they are persecuted for righteousness sake.

2. What do you mean by keeping Conventicles? If you take Conventicles as *Minhew* describes a Conventicle when it is taken in an ill sense, *Pro conventu seditiosorum & sceleratorum*; For a meeting of Seditious and wicked men; These men whom you persecute, abhor Conventicles taken in this sense as much, and it may be more than you do. And if you call the Assemblies of these men Conventicles in this sense, you are guilty of reproaching the servants and the ways of the living God; and so commit a double Sin, the one in reproaching, the other in molesting them while they are serving the Lord. Remember there is a wo to them that call good evil, *Is. 5. 20.*

3. If the privacy of their meeting be that which you stile a Conventicle, then you will find the Disciples of Christ at a Conventicle, and Jesus Christ in the midst of them speaking peace to them. *Joh. 20. 19. Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut; where the Disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.* Here is a private Assembly of the Disciples, they met in the evening, their doors were shut for fear of the Jews, And Christ Jesus honoured this private meeting with his presence, he came to them, he stood in the midst of them, and said, *Peace be unto you.* He did not chide them, and say, *Sirs, what do you here? why do you*

you not meet in the Synagogue? why do you shut the doors? But speaks peace unto them. Let those consider whether they be led by the Spirit of Christ, who if they hear of the servants of Christ met together, with the doors shut, for fear of their Enemies; Cry out, a Conventicle, a Conventicle, and load them with reproaches, and stir up trouble and persecution against them.

2. *Arg.* Those *Informers* do offend those little ones that believe in Jesus Christ. And that is such a dangerous sin, that a man had better have a millstone hang about his neck, and be cast into the depths of the Sea, than to offend the least and meanest of all those that believe in Jesus Christ, *Matt. 18. 6. whoſo ſhall offend one of theſe little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a millſtone were hung about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the Sea.* Observe here,

1. What a dangerous sin it is to offend the meanest person that believeth in Jesus Christ; such a man had better have a millstone hung about his neck and be drowned in the depths of the Sea. If a man were cast into the depth of the Sea, though he had no weight upon him, though he had great skill in swimming, he would certainly be drowned. But if a man had a great stone, a millstone tyed about his neck and were cast into the depths of the Sea, he would sink suddenly and violently to the bottom of the Sea, and it would not be in the power of his friends to recover him again. And who would be in this mans condition to gain the whole world? Yet they that offend them that believe in Christ, are in a worse condition than such a man as is drowned in the deepest place in the Sea with a millstone about his neck; for it is not said, it were equally good, but it were better for him to have a millstone hung about his neck, and be drowned in the midst of the Sea, than offend those that believe in Jesus Christ.

2. The Nature of the sin; It is not said whoſoever ſhall kill them, whoſoever ſhall imprifon them, but whoſoever ſhall offend them.

3. The person offending that is put in this evil condition by his offence. Every one whoever he be that shall offend, *whoſo ſhall offend.* It reacheth all persons in all ages and generations, of all ranks and conditions.

4. The persons whom it is so dangerous to offend, and they are such as believe in Jesus Christ, any one of them, even the least and meanest of them; *whoſo ſhall offend one of theſe little ones which believe in me.* Now there are in these Assemblies to which the *Informers* come, and against which they raise up persecution, many that do believe in Jesus Christ. They do all of them profess Faith in Jesus Christ, and many of them do by their works shew forth their Faith, and give good evidence that they do from their hearts believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. It remains now to be proved that these *Informers*, and those that joyn with them, are guilty of offending such as believe in Christ; which will easily be manifested, if we do but understand what is meant here by Offending one of these little ones which believe on Jesus Christ. By Offending, we are here to understand, as I conceive, whoſo ſhall offer any wrong, do any injury, whoſo ſhall afflict or trouble the least or meanest of those which believe in Jesus Christ. And that this is the genuine sense and meaning of this place may be proved.

1. From the coherence of the words with what goes before: To offend here is opposed to receiving, *vn. 9. whose shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me. But whose shall offend one of these little ones that believeth in me, &c.* Now by receiving is meant, all kind of benefits that are for Christ's sake bestowed on such persons; as *Grotius* well observes, *Vox Sacerdotis, quæ proprie hospitalitatem notat, hic pro omni beneficiorum genere accipitur.* And offending being brought in by way of opposition to receiving as the particle *But* shews; implyeth all kind of wrongs and injuries that are done to such as believe on Christ.

2. The Greek word *σκανδαλίζω*, which is here rendred to Offend, is explained by Learned Authors in this sense; namely, to offer wrong or injury to a man. *Varinus σκανδαλίζω* exponit *ὕβρισιν.* And *Maldonat* observes out of *Chrysostome* upon this place, *Scandalizare hoc loco non est ut alias, malum præbere exemplum; Sed injuriā afficere.* Our Lord Jesus using this word of his Disciples being offended, interprets their being offended to be their being scattered from him, when *Judas* came with Officers and Soldiers to apprehend him; they being afraid they should suffer also, were scattered and dispersed one from another, *Matt. 26. 31. Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night; for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.* If Offending be taken for scattering abroad, how doth this fall in with the practice of these Informers, when they come with Officers and Soldiers, and seize upon those that are Preaching the Word of God, and scatter and disperse the sheep of the flock? are not they guilty of offending those little ones that believe in Christ?

3. This Interpretation, that a man had better have a millstone hung about his neck and be drowned in the depth of the Sea, than to offer any wrong or bring trouble and affliction upon the meanest of those that believe in Jesus Christ, is agreeable to other places of Scripture, which set out the greatness and danger of their sin, who shall presume in their hearts to afflict or wrong any person though never so mean, though a desolate widow, though a fatherless child, such as can't plead their own cause, and have none other to plead for them. *Exod. 22. 22, 23, 24. Ye shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child. If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry. And my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall be widows and your children fatherless.* God is greatly offended with such as afflict others. Mark the words; *Ye shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child.* It's not said widows and fatherless children; but any widow or fatherless child. It is not said, if thou afflict them greatly, but if thou afflict them in any wise. It is not said, if they cry mightily, but if they cry at all unto me. It is not said, mine anger shall be kindled, but my anger shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword. Now it's an aggravation of our sin, when those whom we afflict are gracious persons, such as believe in Jesus Christ; If *Moses* then told the Jews, that if they did in any wise afflict any widow or fatherless child, God's anger would wax hot against them, and he would kill them with the sword. Our Lord Jesus might well say, whose shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that

that a millstone were hung about his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the Sea. Now these *Informers*, do not only offend and bring affliction upon one or two; but upon whole Assemblies of those that believe in Jesus Christ. And though they consider it not now, yet at the day of Judgment when they must appear before Jesus Christ, to give him an account of all things done in the body; they shall wish that at such times as they went to break up and molest the Assemblies of the servants of Christ, a millstone had been hung about their necks, and they had been drowned in the depth of the Sea.

If any one shall not acquiesce in this Interpretation, but shall contend for another sense of the words; namely, that by offending is meant causing to offend; though this seems not agreeable to the context; yet even this Interpretation will reach the *Informers* also. For they cause many to offend by their practise: As,

1. They bring down Officers, some of which are not satisfied in their Consciences to molest these meetings; yet their Faith being not strong enough to withstand the temptation, they are ensnared by these men to wound their own Consciences by sinning against the light of their Consciences.

2. They lay a stumbling-block before the weaker Christians that frequent those Assemblies to say and do irregular things to preserve themselves from sufferings.

3. By scattering and dissipating these Assemblies, they expose weak persons to be led away by erroneous persons, who lye in wait for such occasions as these are to draw them into their nets.

3. *Arg.* Forbidding those to preach the Gospel who are called of God to that work, is an exceeding great sin both against God, and against man. The greatness of this sin is set forth by the Apostle, 1 *Thess.* 2. 16. *Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway, for wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.* Here are several things in this, and the former verse that aggravate the sin of these Jews, that did forbid the Ministers of Christ to preach to the Gentiles.

1. They are ranked with those bloody persons that had killed the Lord Jesus, and their own Prophets, as being of the same race and of the same Spirit. We do not read of any Prophet killed by those Jews, that were then living; yet the Apostle saith, these Jews that forbade the preaching of the Gospel had killed their own Prophets, because they were one Spirit with them, that killed Christ; who both killed the Lord Jesus Christ, and their own Prophets:

2. These Jews who forbade the preaching of the Gospel, are branded with this note, *They please not God, and are contrary to all men.* *Erant vere Sacerdotes*, as *Grotius* saith on the place. They were right *μωσαϊστας*, as another saith. They were haters of God and men.

3. Their sin is further set out by the persons whom they forbade; *Forbidding, as Paul was called by Jesus Christ, to be a Minister of the Gospel, 1 *Tim.* 1. I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful putting me into the Ministry. *Act.* 26. 13. I have appeared unto thee to this purpose, to make thee a Minister.* The persons whom they forbade

forbade Preaching, were the faithful Ministers of Jesus Christ, who were called of God to preach the Gospel.

4. Their sin in forbidding to preach the Gospel, is further aggravated by this, that it hindereth the Salvation of Immortal Souls. *Forbidding us to preach to the Gentiles that they might be saved.* This is the greatest injury and hurt that can be done by any man, to hinder his eternal Salvation. To kill his body is a crying sin, which hastens the vengeance of God; yet it is not so great a damage to a man as to hinder the saving of his Soul. I shall mention some passages out of Dr. Slater's Comment on this Text: "Forbidding us to speak, that is, to preach unto the Gentiles, so proving themselves, *Hostes humani generis, contrariant*, enemies to all men. So are they all to be reputed, that hinder preaching of the Gospel, as capital enemies of mankind: Needs any proof? They deprive us of the greatest good, are enemies in the things that nearest concern us. The Gospel is God's power to Salvation. And *fidēs ex auditu*, how shall they believe without preaching? And how be saved without believing? Of other Persecutors, said our Saviour, they can but kill the body, these are means to cast body and soul into hell; by keeping from them the means of Salvation. And afterward draws this inference; If our Age and Nation have and suffer any of this kind of enemies and opposites to the eternal good of men; of whom we may say as Christ of the Pharisees, They have taken away the key of knowledge, neither entering themselves, nor suffering those that would; let them hear with whom St. Paul yokes them, even with the obstinate shedders of our Saviour's blood, who neither please God, nor love any man. What vengeance God hath in store for such; I had rather themselves should seriously consider, than give us occasion to mention: But if the Lord would admit of no recompence for the blood of the body, but the blood of the slayer; how much sorer vengeance hath he in store for those, that taint themselves with the blood of Souls! It cryeth louder than the blood of Abel.

5. The forbidding to preach the Gospel did fill up the measure of their sins; and so did ripen them for destruction; for when the measure of a persons or nations sins are full, they are ripe for destruction, *Gen. 15. 16. Rev. 16. 18.*

6. These Jews that forbade the preaching of the Gospel brought upon themselves the wrath of God in as dreadful a manner as ever came upon any people under heaven; *wrath is come upon them to the uttermost; ος τέλος* is rendered by Erasmus, *Ad extremum, hoc est, Implacabilis ira Dei.* God was become implacably angry with them; which agrees with what is said of those that misused his Prophets, *2 Chron. 36. 16. The wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy. Vatablus renders it ος τέλος, in aeternum.* And the Æthiopick Translation, *Pervenit ad eos pena aeterna.* Eternal wrath is come upon them; God in his wrath will punish them eternally. *Eftius* gives this sense of the words, *Hic significatur Judaeorum tanquam a Deo reprobatorum justa derelictio in peccatis, & futura damnatio.* Here is signified God's righteous leaving the Jews in their sins, and his damning them in the world to come.

We have seen that it is a grievous sin both against God and Man, a sin that

that brings wrath to the uttermost, to forbid those that are called of God, to preach the Gospel. Now let us see whether these *Informers* and their adherents are guilty of this sin. That the Ministers, which are usually termed *Non-conformists*, are true Ministers of Christ, called by him to Preach the Gospel, hath been proved before. Now that these *Informers* are guilty of forbidding these Ministers to Preach the Gospel, is evident; For,

1. They do procure Officers to come down to their Assemblies, and to call to them to desist from Preaching; and to make them by force and violence to leave off their work, and to scatter and disperse their Assemblies.

2. The way by which the Jews forbade the preaching of the Gospel, was by raising persecution against those that did dispense the Word: *1 Thess. 2. 15, 16. And have persecuted us, forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles, that they might be saved.* Thus do these *Informers*, they go to the Magistrates and incense them, and cause their Meetings to be dispersed, and the Preachers and Hearers to be fined in great sums of Money.

3. The Greek *καλύω*, which the Apostle useth here, is rendered sometimes to hinder, or let, or withstand and oppose; as *Luk. 11. 52. Act. 8. 32. Act. 11. 17.* such as by their actions seek to hinder the Preaching of the Gospel, are under the guilt of forbidding to Preach; although they do not or should not forbid it in words. And thus these *Informers* forbid the Ministers of Christ preaching, for they do what they can to hinder their Meetings, and some of them take great pains to travail up and down to carry on their evil designs.

Though this sin of the Jews in forbidding the Ministers of Christ to Preach to the Gentiles that they might be saved, was an odious sin; a sin that brought down the wrath of God to the uttermost; yet they might have had many specious pretences for their sin, even as these *Informers* had for theirs (which I shall answer afterward) which yet did not excuse them, nor keep off the wrath of God from them. I will mention some of them. As,

1. We are not against Preaching, we have God's Word read and preached in our Synagogues every Sabbath-day, *Act. 15. 21. Moses of old time hath in every City them that preach him; being read in the Synagogues every Sabbath-day.* It is those mens preaching only that we forbid, that conform not to the Rites and Customs of *Moses*; *Forbidding us to speak.*

2. These men whom we forbid to speak, are men prohibited by our Rulers to teach in the name of Christ, *Act. 4. 17, 58. Let us straitly threaten them that they speak henceforth no more in this name. And they called them and commanded them not to speak at all, nor teach in the name of Jesus.* This strait charge was given by the Rulers, Elders, Scribes, and the High-priests met in Council together, *v. 5, 6.* And consequently by Authority Civil and Ecclesiastical.

3. These men do not only transgress the Commandments of the Rulers, but of Jesus Christ, whose Disciples they profess themselves to be, who forbade their preaching to the Gentiles, *Matt. 10. 5, 6. These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not in the way of the Gentiles, and into any City of the Samaritans, enter ye not, but go rather to the lost Sheep of the house of Israel.*

4. Let the Gentiles come to us and be circumcised, after the manner of *Moses*, and we will receive them, and then they may hear Preaching in our Synagogues every Sabbath-day, and be sure of Salvation: *For Salvation is of the Jews*, Joh. 4. 22.

5. The Church of the Jews hath been a glorious Church; the only visible Church in the world for some thousands of years, and these men preaching to the Gentiles will diminish the glory of this famous Church. Their great Apostle teacheth us, that their riches will be our diminution, *Rom. 15. 12.*

6. Hitherto we have had but one Church, and now by their preaching to the Gentiles, we are like to have many more Churches erected.

7. These men are cast out of the Synagogue by the general consent of the Jewish Church, *Joh. 9. 22.* *The Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess he was the Christ, he should be cast out of the Synagogue.* And may we not forbid an excommunicate person preaching?

8. Neither these men that preach, nor the Gentiles that hear them, do observe the Rites and Ceremonies of the Law of *Moses*, which the Church of God hath observed ever since *Moses* gave them to us, *Act. 21. 21.* They are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews that are among the Gentiles, to forsake *Moses*; saying, that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs. The Jews might have pleaded these and several other excuses for their forbidding the Apostles preaching to the Gentiles; yet none of these did keep off God's wrath from them. And therefore let not the *Informers* shrowd themselves, and seek to hide their sin under specious pretences (which shall be enquired into more particularly afterward); but lay to heart the greatness of their sin in hindring these Ministers from preaching the Gospel of Christ, whereby men may be saved.

4. *Arg.* They that do not receive Christ's Ministers, nor hear their words, shall be in a worse condition than the men of *Sodom* at the day of Judgment: *Mat. 10. 14, 15.* *And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet; verily I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah at the day of Judgment than for that city.* The men of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* will be in a very miserable condition at the day of Judgment, for they were exceeding great sinners: *Gen. 13. 13.* *The men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly.* They were such sinners as that the Lord rained down fire and brimstone upon them. And that fire which consumed the men of *Sodom*, was a forerunner, a declaration, and testimony to the world of the eternal fire, which they and other impenitent sinners should suffer in the other world: *Jude v. 7.* *Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, in like manner giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.* And yet our Lord Jesus who best understood how every man's case shall go at the day of Judgment, in regard he himself is the Judge of the world, asserts it for an undoubted truth, (*verily I say unto you*) that it shall be more tolerable at the day of Judgment, for the Inhabitants of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*, than for them that do not receive those Ministers whom he sends; or do not hear

hear the Word they Preach. And if so, how dreadful will the condition of these *Informers* and their Adherents be at the day of Judgment, who do not only not receive the Ministers of Christ, nor hear the Word they Preach; but endeavour to suppress their preaching, and will not suffer those that would hear and embrace them to attend upon their Ministry, persecuting them that Preach from house to house, which is a greater sin, than barely not to receive the Preachers of the Word?

Obj. We do receive Christ's Ministers, and do embrace his Gospel, although we hear not these men, neither suffer others to hear them; but do what we can to suppress them. And therefore the fore-mentioned Scripture doth not touch us.

1. Though you receive the Gospel of Christ with your ears, yet your opposition that you make against the Ministers, shews you have not received the Gospel of Christ into your hearts. For this makes the wolf lye down with the lamb, and keeps the Asp and the Cockatrice from hurting the sucking child, *Isai.* 11. And makes the briar to become a myrtle-tree, and the thorn a fir-tree, *Isai.* 55. 11. 13.

2. Persecuting those that preach and hear the Gospel, is a greater sin, than not to receive the Ministers of Christ, nor hear their words; And if you be one of those that persecute the Ministers of Christ, this Scripture will do more than touch you; it will take hold of you, and fall heavier upon you than if all the rocks and mountains were cast upon you.

S. Arg. The Judgments threatned and executed upon them that by their informing against, and betraying the people of God into the hands of their enemies have brought them into trouble, do plainly evince the greatness of the *Informers* sin. I pass over the remarkable Judgments that have been executed on this generation of men in our days; if any one would be at the pains to make a collection of them, it might be a warning to others. But I shall wave these, and mention only some examples out of the Scripture, the truth whereof is questioned by no man, that believeth the Scripture to be the Word of God. *Dag* turned *Informer*, and informed against *Abimelech* the Priest, for entertaining *David* at his house, and enquiring of God for him, and giving him Victuals, and giving him the Sword of *Goliath*, *1 Sam.* 22. 9, 10. And by this information he so incensed *Saul*, that he slew those Priests that had entertained *David*. But now mark what a grievous curse fell upon this *Informer*, *Pf.* 52. 5. *God shall likewise destroy thee for ever, he shall take thee away, and pluck thee out of thy dwelling-place, and root thee out of the land of the living.* That this curse is denounced against *Dag* for informing against *Abimelech*, for entertaining *David* at his house, is evident from the title of the Psalm: *A Psalm of David, when Dag the Edomite came and told Saul, and said unto him, David is come to the house of Abimelech.* The curse denounced against *Dag* is very dreadful, consisting of these branches.

1. Eternal destruction; and that from the hands of God, *God shall likewise destroy thee for ever.* As he had been the destruction of the Lord's Priests, so God should destroy him, but with a more terrible destruction; they were destroyed with a temporal destruction, but he shall destroy thee for ever.

2. God threatens to take him away, and pluck him from his dwelling-place, which words speak his anger, yea, hot displeasure, and that is very dreadful. *David* was afraid that God should deal with him in his anger. *O Lord rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.* But as for *Boog*, the words speak God to be full of fury against him. He shall take thee away, and pluck thee out of thy dwelling-place.

3. Destruction to him and all that belong to him. *He shall root thee out of the land of the living.* He shall utterly ruinate thee and thine; leaving thee neither root nor branch; or the rooting him out of the land of the living, may refer to the depriving him of eternal life. Let then the *Doctrs* of our age consider this dreadful curse, who if they see, or can hear of an house where the Ministers of Christ are praying to God, or giving the bread of life to hungry Souls, they go and tell the Magistrates, and get Warrants to distrain and get away their goods from them. What became of those *Informers* against *Daniel*, who finding him at Prayer, went and accused him to the King as a transgressour of the Law, and got him cast into the Den of Lions? By the just judgment of God, these men and their wives and children were cast into the Den of Lions, and rent a-pieces, *Dan. 6. 11: 13, 24.* These *Informers* do the like in our dayes, if they find the servants of God Praying and Preaching, they go and accuse them to the Magistrate, and get them punished; and may they not justly fear, that though they have no punishment here, the King of Kings will cast them into a worse place than the Den of Lions at the day of Judgment; even into the bottomless pit, where they shall be tormented of roaring Lions for ever and ever? *Haman* who informed against the Jews, and got a decree to destroy them, came to a miserable end, he dyed upon a pair of Gallows fifty foot high. But above all other examples, I would have these *Informers* take notice what befel *Judas* for informing against Christ. He fell into such a woful condition, that it had been good for him that he had never been born, *Matt. 26. 24.* After he had betrayed Christ, he was in such a distressed condition, that he was weary of his life, and went away and hung himself, *Matt. 27. 5.* After he had hung himself, he fell down headlong and burst asunder, and his bowels gushed out, *Act. 1. 18.* And after he was dead, and his Soul was out of his body, it was carried into hell-torments, *v. 25.* See *Pisr.* Now what was it that this *Judas* did to Jesus Christ? he did not accuse him to *Pilat*, he did not nail him to the cross, he did not thrust a spear into his side; but this he did, he betrayed him into his enemies hands by discovering who, and where he was. Therefore as Christ to warn us of Apostacy, said, Remember *Lot's* wife. So may I say to *Informers*, Remember *Judas*.

Obj. Why do you tell us of *Judas*? He was a damned wretch, we curse him to the pit of hell; for betraying our Lord Jesus Christ; we would have been torn in pieces, and suffered a thousand deaths, rather than we would have done such an act as *Judas* did; we abhor *Judas* as much as any man upon the face of the earth.

Ans. 1. You do the same thing in effect, as *Judas* did, and in judging him you condemn your selves, *Rom. 2. 1.* For our Lord Jesus accounts that they which persecute his members; persecute him: *Act. 9. 4, 5.* *Saul, Saul, why persecuest thou me? And he said, who art thou Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus.*

Jesus whom thou persecutest. Saul did not persecute Jesus Christ in his own person, for he was at God's right hand out of Saul's reach; but he persecuted the members of Christ, and the Lord Jesus counted himself persecuted in the persecution of his members; what is done to the least of his members, he takes as done to himself, *Matt. 25. 40.* Now as Judas did, he was guide to them that took Jesus, *Act. 1. 16.* He knew the place where Christ was, and got Officers and Soldiers to go along with him; so do ye.

2. You are in some respects worse than Judas; for Judas repented of what he had done: He made an open confession of his sin, he made restitution of the Money he had taken; you do none of these things. In stead of your repenting, you glory in your sin, and are more and more hardened in your evil courses. Judas did not bring Officers to take Christ whilst he was Preaching to the people, or Praying to God: He did not disturb him in his worship; but you come in the time of Prayer and Preaching the Word, as though you neither feared God, nor regarded Man; and in a prophane manner rush upon these men while they are serving God.

3. Even thus the Scribes and Pharisees of old seemed to disdain their Forefathers, killing the Prophets, and said, If they had lived in their days, they would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the Prophets, and they builded their tombs, and garnished their Sepulchres, pretending to honour them, *Matt. 23. 29, 30.* Yet they killed our Lord Jesus, and the Apostles.

6 Arg. The very neglecting acts of mercy towards the Members of Christ, as not feeding them when they are hungry, not clothing them when they are naked, the not-visiting them when they are sick and in prison, will cause the Lord Jesus to cast men among the devils, into the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, *Matt. 25. 41, 42, 43, 44, 45.* To take away by violence the food and the rayment of the Members of Christ, is a greater sin, than not to feed them when they are hungry, and not to cloth them when they are naked. To throw them into Prisons, and thereby to impair their health is a greater sin, than not to visit them when sick or in prison. If they shall be cursed by Jesus Christ, and be cast into everlasting fire among the Devils, who do not feed, cloath, and visit the Members of Christ, when hungry, sick, and in prison, nor take them in when strangers; of how much sorer punishment shall these Informers and their Adherents be thought worthy of at the day of Judgement, who do take away the food and rayment of the Members of Christ, and will not suffer them to dwell in peace in their own houses, but thrust them into prison, and that for righteousness sake?

7 Arg. These men have been several years under affliction, having suffered the loss of their livelihoods, and been exposed to other troubles; and it is greatly displeasing unto God, that affliction should be added to his people when they are under affliction, *Zech. 1. 13.* *I am very sore displeased with the Heathen that are at ease; for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction.* Had you a love to these men, you would pity them under their affliction, *Job. 6. 14.* *To him that is afflicted pity should be shewed from his friend.* Be it so that God hath a controversie with them, it doth not become you to trample them under your feet, *Is. 47. 6, 11.*

8 *Aug.* As they are Ministers of the Gospel, your sin is exceeding great in hindring them in the exercise of their Ministry, and persecuting them for Preaching the Gospel. For,

1. To misuse the Lord's Messengers and his Prophets, is a sin that brings down wrath without remedy : 2 *Chr.* 36. 15, 16. *And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers ; but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his Prophets, until the wrath of God arose against these men, until there was no remedy.*

2. God will smite through the loins of those that rise up against his Ministers, *Deut.* 33. 12. *Bless, Lord, his substance, and accept the work of his hands; smite through the loins of them that rise up against him, and of them that hate him; that they never rise again.* This is *Moses* his Prayer, which he puts up for *Levi*, when he was blessing the Children of *Israel* before his death, *v.* 1. 8. The tribe of *Levi* was separated by the Lord to bear the Ark of the Lord, and to Minister to him, and to bless in his name, *Deut.* 10. 9. And therefore what is here spoken of *Levi*, belongs to all the Ministers of the Gospel; what *Moses* prays for in the behalf of *Levi*, that God will do to the Ministers of the Gospel, and to them that rise up against them; He will bless their substance, and accept their works, *he will strike through the loins of them that rise up against them.* And what is that?

1. He will give them a fatal stroke, he will give them such a deadly wound, that they shall never recover it, he will break in pieces their power and strength. The loins may signify a mans strength, *Job.* 40. 16. *Lo, now his strength is in his loins.*

2. He will not only punish themselves in a dreadful manner; but he will visit this their sin upon their posterity, from generation to generation; persecuting the Ministers of the Gospel, is a sin which God visits not openly upon the fathers, but the children, and the childrens children unto the third and fourth generation, *Exod.* 20. 5. The loins does signify a mans posterity, *1 Kings.* 8. 19. *Thy Son that shall come out of thy loins.*

3. The loins signify sometimes the mind or understanding; as *1 Pet.* 1. 13. *Gird up the loins of your mind.* And if loins be taken in this sense, the meaning is, Lord give them up to a reprobate mind, and that is a fore judgment, and a very dreadful token of the wrath of God, *Rom.* 1. 18. 28. And it's usual with the Lord to smite the enemies of his Ministers with this judgment. And it's rare if ever such persons rise again, that are thus smitten of God. Now those whose loins God will strike through that they rise not again, are such as hate, and such as rise against the Sons of *Levi*: that is, the secret and the open enemies of the Ministers of the Gospel. There are some that hate them, but conceal their hatred, these are secret enemies; and there are some that manifest their hatred by rising up against them, these are open enemies.

3. The Ministers of the Gospel are Christ's Embassadors sent into the world to treat of peace between God and men, *2 Cor.* 5. 20. *Now then we are Embassadors for Christ, as though he did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.* What injuries are done to an Ambassador of an earthly Prince, he takes them as ill as if they were done to his own person: If the Ambassador be reviled, plundered, imprisoned, interrupted

raptured in the delivery of his message ; the Prince takes this as ill, and will punish it as severely as if it had been done to himself. So doth the King of Heaven, who is King of Kings, take all injuries done to his Ambassadors as done against himself, *1 Thess. 4. 8. He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath given us his holy Spirit.* And what is said of despising is true of all other affronts and injuries which are offered to the Ministers of the Gospel, the Lord takes them as done to himself.

Obj. If these men were Prophets, or Apostles, and could work miracles ; if then we should molest them ; we should think our selves worthy of death. One might fear the wrath of God should break forth upon us ; but they are but ordinary men, subject to the same passions and infirmities as other men are ; and therefore we can't think there is such danger in opposing them.

Ans. 1. Ordinary Pastors and Teachers are of God's sending and appointing, they are of divine institution, as well as Prophets and Apostles, *1 Cor. 12. 28. God hath set some in the Church ; first Apostles, secondarily Prophets, thirdly Teachers, after that Miracles : Eph. 4. 11. He gave some Apostles, some Prophets, some Evangelists, and some Pastors and Teachers.* It is God gives, and God sets Pastors and Teachers in his Church, as well as Apostles, Prophets and Evangelists.

2. The Apostles and Prophets, though holy men of God, and guided by an infallible Spirit ; yet were but men subject to the like passions as we are. *Elias* was an eminent Prophet ; yet is said of him, *Jam. 5. 17. Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are.* *Barnabas* and *Paul* were eminent Apostles ; yet when the men of *Lystra* would have adored them as Gods, and done Sacrifice to them ; they cried out, *Sirs, why do you these things ? we also are men of like passions with you, Act. 14. 15.* They that despise the Ministers of the Gospel in those days, would have despised the Prophets and Apostles, had they lived in their days ; for they that were enemies to the power of Godliness despised the Apostles and Prophets then, even as many do now the Ministers of Christ. Take an instance of the Apostle *Paul*, who though he was full of the Holy Ghost, yet some thought and spake contemptibly of him, *2 Cor. 10. 2. Some think of us, as though we walked according to the flesh ; v. 10. His letters say they are weighty and powerful ; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.* Many other vilifying expressions were given concerning this Apostle, which I forbear to mention.

3. A man may be a true Minister of Jesus Christ, and yet be able to work no miracles : *John* the Baptist was a true Minister, (and lived in the time when the gift of miracles was frequently given) yet it's said of him, *John did no miracle, Joh. 11. 41.* And some that had the gift of miracles were destitute of true Grace, *Matt. 7. 23, 24.* And therefore we should not decry a man as no Minister of Christ, because he can't work miracles ; especially seeing working of miracles is now ceased.

4. Our Lord Jesus would have every one of his Ministers whom he sends to Preach the Gospel received with love and honour, and all kindness shewn to them, as well as to his Apostles and Prophets. And to engage us to

an honourable, willing and chearful reception of them ; he telleth us , that he will take it all one , when we receive his Ministers , as if we received himself or his Father : *Joh. 13. 20. Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that receiveth whomsoever I send, receiveth me, and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me.* It is not said, He that receiveth my Apostles , or he that receiveth my Prophets ; but he that receiveth whomsoever I send, receiveth me. And that we may be assured thereof, he adds a double asseveration : *Verily, verily, I say unto you.* Hence I argue, If he that receiveth whomsoever Christ sendeth, receiveth the Lord Jesus Christ, then he that receiveth, or persecuteth any of the Ministers of the Lord Jesus, whom he sends to preach his Gospel , receiveth and persecuteth the Lord Jesus himself.

9 Arg. It is Satan that stirs up men to betray , persecute, imprison, and make war against the servants of Christ ; when Judas took up a resolution to betray Jesus Christ, it was the Devil that put this motion into his heart, *Joh. 13. 2. The Devil having put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot Simons son to betray him.* When there is trouble raised up against those that keep the Commandments of God, it is the Devil that stirs up men to raise up persecution against them, *Rev. 12. 17. And the Dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the Commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus.* This action of betraying, imprisoning, and persecuting the servants of Christ, is such a fulfilling of the Devils will, and hath so much of the Devils nature in it, that the Holy Ghost calls the betrayers and persecutors of the people of God by the name of Devils, *Joh. 6. 70, 71. Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a Devil? He spake of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve.* Why was Judas called a Devil ? It was for betraying the Lord Jesus : *Rev. 2. 10. Behold, the Devil shall cast some of you into Prison.* The Devil did not appear in his own person, and hale these Saints into Prison; but he stirred up evil-minded men to do his work, and they fulfilling his lusts, are called by his name. Did the Informers consider that it was the Devil put it into their hearts to disturb these Assemblies, where Prayer is made to God, and God's Word is Preached, it would startle them, and make them draw back, unless they were wonderfully hardened in their sin.

10 Arg. These men whom you afflict and molest are righteous men ; as hath been before proved. And it is a mighty sin to afflict righteous and just men. There are different degrees of sins, some are small sins, others great sins, others mighty great sins. This sin of afflicting the just, is among those that are mighty great sins, *Amos 9. 12. I know your manifold transgressions, and your mighty sins, they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right.* The Prophet having taxed Israel of being guilty of mighty sins, and if any should ask, what mighty sins they were guilty of ? he presently adds, *They afflict the just.* See the greatness of this sin in several particular ?

1. All the wrongs and injuries done to righteous men , the Lord takes as ill as if done against himself, *Zeck. 2. 8. He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of mine eye.* The eye is the tenderest part of the body, and the apple

apple of the eye the tenderest part of the eye ; a touch on the apple of the eye is more grievous, more afflicting, than a blow on the back or hand ; it is not said, he that killeth you, he that beareth you with many stripes ; but he that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of mine eye ; intimating that the smallest afflictions, the least troubles that are brought upon righteous men, are exceeding grievous to God, he counts what is done to them, as done to the apple of his eye. There are no afflictions brought upon righteous men ; but he esteemeth himself afflicted in their affliction, *Jer. 63. 9. In all their affliction he was afflicted* : when they are in misery, their miseries are not only grievous to them, but they grieve his Soul also, *Judg. 10. 6. His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel.* And what a monstrous sin is this, for a creature to presume in his heart to do that which afflicts and grieves the Soul of God, in whom we all live, and move, and have our being ; and to strike at the apple of his eye !

2. Righteous men are nearly related to God ; they are his servants. *Pf. 116. 6. Truly I am thy servant, I am thy servant.* They are his friends, *Job. 15. 14: Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.* They are God's children, *Gal. 3. 26. Ye are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ.* They are members of Christ's body, *1 Cor. 12. 27. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.* And it must needs be an horrible sin to abuse, to imprison, to fine, to hale out of their meetings, the servants, the friends, the children of God, and the members of Christ ; when they are about their Masters work, when they are worshipping and serving their heavenly Father.

3. The Lord beareth a great love to righteous men, *Pf. 146. 8. The Lord loveth the righteous.* And how contrary is this to God's Will, that you should afflict those whom he loveth ?

4. Righteous men are blessings to the places where they live, *Prou. 11. 11. By the blessing of the upright, the city is exalted, what was promised to Abraham ? Gen. 12. 2. I will bless thee, and thou shalt be a blessing ;* belongs to all the members of Jesus Christ, *Gal. 3. 9. So then they which be of faith, are blessed with faithful Abraham.* And therefore they that afflict and persecute righteous men, are not only unthankful for, but they are enemies to their own good, for they partake of many blessings for righteous mens sake. What Laban said to Jacob, *Gen. 30. 27. I have learned by experience that the Lord hath blessed me for thy sake.* The same might those Villages, and Cities say, where righteous men dwell, did they observe the dealings of God with them ; we have learned by experience that the Lord hath blessed us for these righteous mens sake.

11 *Arg.* The practise of these men, who punish, or cause to be punished, righteous men for praying to God, and for Preaching and Hearing God's holy Word ; is greatly prejudicial to the whole Kingdom, and that on several accounts.

1. As it brings down National Judgments ; one man's sin may cause a whole Nation to suffer. Achan's sin brought God's wrath upon all the Congregation of Israel, *Josh. 22. 20. Did not Achan the son of Zera commit a trespass in the accursed thing ; and wrath fell on all the Congregation of Israel, and that man perished not alone in his iniquity ?* What was Achan's sin, which

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brought wrath upon all the Congregation of Israel? we find Achan himself confessing it to *Joshuah*, *Josh.* 7. 20, 21. *Achan answered Joshuah and said, Indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and thus, and thus have I done. When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of Silver, and a wedge of Gold of fifty shekles weight; then I covered them, and took them, and behold they are hid in the earth, in the midst of my tent, and the Silver under it. The sin of these Informers seems to me equal, if not greater, and as likely to bring down wrath upon the Nation; as Achan's sin; and that for these Reasons:*

1. The men of *Jericho* were God's enemies, and they and their substance were accursed of God, *Josh.* 6. 17. *The city shall be accursed, even it, and all that are therein:* But the righteous, and all they have, are blessed of the Lord, *Psa.* 3. 8. *Thy blessing is upon thy people;* not only their persons are blessed, but their substance also, *Deut.* 33. 11. *Bless, Lord, his substance.* See also *Deut.* 8. 4, 5. Now is it not as great a sin for these men to oppress God's friends who are the blessed of the Lord, and to take away their substance which is under the blessing of God; as it was for Achan to take away silver, and gold, and rayment from the men of *Jericho*, which were God's enemies; and both they, and all that they had, were under his curse.

2. Achan committed his sin secretly, he hid what he took in his tent. *Behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent.* He laboured to cover his sin; but these men declare their sin as *Sodom*: They are not afraid to sin openly in the sight of all men. And the more openly and impudently a mans sin is committed, the more provoking to God to send down his Judgments.

3. Achan confessed his sin, and thereby gave glory to the God of Israel, *Josh.* 7. 20. These men glory in their shame, and will not be brought to acknowledge their iniquity.

4. Achan was punished for his trespass, all Israel stoned him with stones, and burnt his house with fire, *Josh.* 7. 25. But these men are so far from being punished, that they oft-times go away with a reward. Another instance of a whole Nation suffering for the sin of one man, we have in *David's* case. *David's* numbring the people, provoked God to send a Pestilence, which in three days time, slew seventy thousand men, *1 Chron.* 21. 2. 7. And *David* said to *Joab*, and to the Rulers of the People, *Go number Israel from Beersheba even to Dan; and bring the number unto me, that I may know it. And God was displeased with this thing; therefore he smote Israel, v. 14. So the Lord sent Pestilence upon Israel, and there fell of Israel seventy thousand men.* Let it be considered whether those Informers that go to the Assemblies of these men, to take the names of those that worship God in order to the punishing them for their serving God, do not sin in as high a degree, as *David* did in the numbring the people: For,

1. The numbring of the people was not without a president; for it was done by *Moses* at God's appointment in the second year after Israel came out of *Egypt*, *Num.* 1. 2. But to number mens names in order to punish them for being present then, and where Prayer is made to God in the name of Jesus Christ,

Christ, and God's Word preached, hath not been practised by any persons that have occurred to my observation in reading the holy Scriptures.

2. David might have pretended better things to have excused his sin, than these Informers have for their practice. As by numbring the people he might see the accomplishment of God's promise, who promised Abraham a great and numerous posterity, and all the Generations from Abraham to David, were but fourteen Generations, Matt. 1. 17. Now that there should be a thousand thousand, and a hundred thousand men that drew sword, and four hundred threescore and ten thousand in Judah, beside Levi and Benjamin that were not numbred, 2 Chron. 21. 5. 6. When David heard this great number, he might have made this use of it, what a demonstration is here of God's faithfulness and power, that from one, and him as good as dead, should spring so great a multitude of men, besides women and children. Besides, he might have said, what cause have I to be thankful to God that hath put such honour upon me, to make me a King of such a numerous people? For in the multitude of people is the Kings honour, Prov. 14. 28. He might also judge it a point of prudence conducing to his credit and his peoples safety, to know his strength, that having so many potent enemies on every side, he might judge when and with whom to make War and Peace, as it becomes a wise and wary Prince to do, Luk. 14. 31. But these things did not excuse David from sin, God saw an irregularity in David, whether it were pride, or curiosity, or neglecting the offering that was prescribed, when the people was numbred, Num. 12. 13, 14. I shall not determine.

3. David was troubled in conscience for his sin, and made an humble confession of it to God, 2 Sam. 24. 10. And Davids heart smote him after that he had numbred the people; and David said unto the Lord, I have sinned greatly in that I have done; and now I beseech thee, O Lord, take away the iniquity of thy servant, for I have done very foolishly. But we hear of no remorse from these men.

4. David offended but once in this kind, but these men go on in their evil way, and often renew their sin.

5. David when convinced of his sin, was willing to have suffered death, so that God would not proceed to punish Israel for his sin, 2 Sam. 24. 17. And David spake unto the Lord when he saw the Angel that smote the people; and said, Lo I have sinned, and I have done wickedly; but these sheep what have they done? Let thy hand, I pray thee, be against me, and against my fathers house. Whereby it is evident that he had no evil design upon the people, when he caused them to be numbred. But these men that go to these Assemblies to take names, and watch them as they come forth, in order to the getting them to be punished, make it manifest that they have a design upon them to do evil to them.

2. The doings of these Informers are prejudicial to the whole Kingdom; because righteous men are the strength of a Nation, and are blessings to the places where they live, Zech. 12. 5. The governors of Judah shall say in their heart; The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in the Lord of Hosts their God, Prov. 11. 11. By the blessing of the upright, the city is exalted. When Elisha was dying, Joash the King of Israel wept over him, and said,

My Father, my Father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof, 2 King. 12. 14. Intimating that *Elisba* by his Prayers, was a greater security and protection to *Israel*, than all the chariots and horsemen that were in *Israel*. Now if righteous men are blessings to a Nation, if they are the strength and security of a Nation; the persecuting and afflicting them, must needs be prejudicial to a Nations welfare.

3. The persecuting these men, weakens the Protestant; and strengthens the Popish interest in this Nation: For these men both in their Preaching and Writing, have appeared eminently against the Popish Doctrine; and it's not long since that we were called both by the King and Parliament to humble our selves by fasting for the growth of Popery in the Nation. And that which weakens the Protestant, and strengthens the Papal interest, must be acknowledged to be prejudicial to the Nation, by all that are well affected to the Protestant Religion.

12. The Informers are guilty of smiting their fellow-servants, and that is a provoking sin; when a man without just cause shall smite his fellow-servant, especially if he smite him for doing his Master's work, *Matt. 24. 48, 49, 50, 51.* *Eut if that evil servant shall say in his heart, my Lord delayeth his coming. And shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken. The Lord of that servant shall come in a day that he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites, there shall he weeping and gnashing of teeth.* I would mind the Informers of several things from this Scripture, which do nearly concern them.

1. These are in God's account evil servants, that smite their fellow-servants without a cause. *If that evil servant smite his fellow-servant.*

2. God usually gives up such as smite their fellow-servants to sensuality; that they prove sottish persons, companions of Drunkards. *Smite his fellow-servant, and eat and drink with the drunken.*

3. Smiting fellow-servants brings swift and unexpected destruction. The swiftness of the judgment is implied, in that God takes men oftentimes in the beginning of their sin. *And shall begin to smite his fellow-servants.* The unexpectedness of the Judgment in that sometime he does not give a days, no, nor an hours warning: *The Lord of that servant shall come in a day, that he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of.*

4. Utter destruction will be the portion of such as smite their fellow-servants, *And shall cut him asunder.* If a man be cut and flath'd in his wounds, he may be healed of his wounds, but if he be cut asunder, he is destroyed without remedy.

5. Such as smite their fellow-servants, shall have their portion among hypocrites in the bottomless pit, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. *And shall appoint him his portion with hypocrites, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.* And why with hypocrites? It is, either because whatever pretences such may make of zeal, they are but hypocrites in God's account, that smite their fellow-servants; or it is, because of all men hypocrites shall have the greatest portion of torment in the other world, as being the chiefest of sinners, in *1/. 33. 14.*

If they reply, This Scripture doth not concern us *Informers*, but such as have power in Church or State, and abuse their power to the vexing of their fellow servants.

Ans. I grant that *Grotius* expoundeth this place of Pastors, who do either themselves, or who stir up Magistrates to vex and deal cruelly with other Ministers and Christians, for reproving them for their corrupt opinions or sinful lives; or for differing from them in some circumstantial things.

2. If it be taken in this sense, yet it will reach the *Informers*; for like sins shall have like judgments. If Superiors for abusing their power, shall be so sorely punished, then these *Informers*, who are Inferiour persons, must not think to escape the Judgment of God, while they incense the Magistrate to vex and molest those that are faithful and peaceable, only they differ from others in some circumstantial and disputable things.

CHAP. III.

The Informer's Pleas answered.

Pliz 1. IF we did know or think that these were righteous men, we would not persecute them to gain the whole world, but we look upon them as Phanaticks, Factionous persons, Schismatics, Pessilent fellows, Seducers of the people, Troublers of the Nation; yea, the very worst sort of men, and therefore we do think we well to persecute them, and do what lyeth in our power to suppress them.

Ans. 1. This was the same way which the Jews used to persecute the Prophets, Jesus Christ, and his Apostles; they said all manner of evil against them falsely, and then persecuted them not as righteous men, but as evil doers, *Matt. 5. 11. 12. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake; rejoyce and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven: For so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you.* So persecuted they the Prophets; How? By reviling them, and speaking all manner of evil against them falsely, and persecuting them under the notion of evil doers, and not as righteous men. The Jews would not own that they stoned Christ for righteousness sake, or any of his good works; but gave out that he was a blasphemous, and they stoned him for blasphemy, *Joh. 10. 33. The Jews answered him, and said; For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy; because thou being a man, makest thyself God.*

9. When you have spoken all the evil you can of these Ministers, that are called *Non-conformists*, you cannot say worse of them than the Jews spake of the Prophets, and the Apostles, and our Lord Jesus Christ himself; yet not only Jesus Christ, but the Prophets and Apostles were righteous men. Do you look upon these Ministers to be Phanaricks or Mad-men? So Paul was censured as a mad-man, *Act. 26, 24.* *Paul thou art beside thy self, much learning hath made thee mad.* Yea, the Jews thought and said Christ was mad, and gave out that the Devil was in him, and wondered that any would go to hear him, *Joh. 10. 20.* *Many of them said, He is mad and hath a Devil, why hear ye him?* Do you question the authority of these Ministers to Preach the Gospel? So did the Jews question Christ's, *Matt. 21. 23.* *And when he was come into the Temple, the chief Priests and Elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority dost thou these things, and who gave thee this authority?* Will you not believe these men to be true Ministers of Christ? So it was with the Jews, they would not believe *Jeremiah* to be a Prophet of the Lord, but thought he made himself a Prophet. We find *Shemaiah* writing thus to *Zephaniah*, *Jer. 29. 26, 27.* *The Lord hath made thee Priest instead of Jeboiada the Priest, that ye should be officers in the house of the Lord; for every man that is mad, and maketh himself a Prophet, that thou shouldst put him in Prison, and in the Stocks.* Now therefore, why hast thou not reproved *Jeremiah* of *Anathoth*, which maketh himself a Prophet to you? Do you give out that it is not the Lord that stirs up these men to Preach the Gospel, but the people set them on out of evil and seditious designs? So said they of *Jeremiah*, *Jer. 43. 2, 3.* *Then spake Azariah, and Johanan, and all the proud men, saying unto Jeremiah; Thou speakest falsely, The Lord our God hath not sent thee to say, Go not into Egypt to sojourn there: But Baruch the son of Neriah setteth thee against us, to deliver us into the hand of the Caldeans, that they might put us to death, and carry us away captives into Babylon.* Do you look upon these Ministers as pestilent fellows, movers of sedition, ring-leaders of the Sectaries? and do you inform against them as such to the Governours? So did the Jews look upon the Apostle Paul, *Act. 24. 1, 5, 6.* *Tertullus informed the Governour against Paul. We found this man a pestilent fellow, a mover of sedition among all the Jews through all the world, and a ring-leader of the sect of the Nazarens, who also hath gone about to profane the Temple.* Do you look upon these as the troublers of the Nation? So did *Ahab* look upon *Elijah*, *1 Kings 18. 17.* *When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel? Are they aspersed as though they were enemies to the King? So was Elijah represented to Ahab, 1 Kings 21. 20.* *Ahab said to Elijah, Hast thou found me, Oh mine enemy? Are they looked upon as none of the King's friends that shew kindness to these men, when they fall into their hands? Thus the Jews cried out to Pilate, that if he released Christ, he would be looked upon as no friend to Caesar, Joh. 19. 12.* *From thenceforth Pilate sought to release him, but the Jews cried out. If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend.* Do you think these men are not fit to live in the Nation, nor in any other part of the world, and that it would do well if they were put to death? So the Jews thought and said of the Apostle Paul, *Act. 22. 22.* *Away with such a fellow from the earth; for it is not fit he should live.* Not to instance in more particulars,

ticalars, when you have vilified and reproached these Ministers as much as possibly you can; you cannot esteem or speak worse of them, than the blessed Apostles were esteemed and spoken of in the world, 1 Cor. 4. 9, 10, 11, 12. *I think God hath set forth us Apostles last, as it were appointed unto death. For we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels and to men. We are fools for Christs sake,--we are weak,--despised,--persecuted, disamed. we are made as the filth of the world, and are the off-scouring of all things unto this day.* And therefore the reproaches of the world can be no evidence against them, that they are not righteous men, or true Ministers of Jesus Christ.

3. Your reviling and reproachful language that you give these men, is so far from excusing your sin in persecuting them; that it is a great aggravation of it. For reviling language will shut a man out of the Kingdom of God, 1 Cor. 6. 9, 10. *Know you not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God? Be not deceived? Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners shall inherit the Kingdom of God.* Revilers are in the Catalogue of those that shall not inherit the Kingdom of God. And if any think he may be a reviler, and yet go to Heaven, he deceiveth himself. He that calleth his brother fool, is in danger of hell-fire, *Matt. 5. 21.* But I say unto you, *whoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of Judgment; and whoever shall say to his brother Racha, shall be in danger of the Connell: But whoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire.* To call the servants of Christ factious, seditious persons, is as bad or worse than to call them fools. And therefore they that use this opprobrious language, are in danger of hell-fire. And I may add this further, if you would be parakers of the Kingdom of Heaven, you must not only your selves forbear to reproach men that fear God; but you must not believe, nor entertain the reproaches that you hear from others, *Pf. 15. 1.* *Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle, who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.*

4. It bordereth upon the sin against the Holy Ghost, to speak evil of those men out of envy and hatred, concerning whom we are perswaded and convinced in our Consciences that they are righteous men, *Mark. 3. 28, 29, 30.* *Verily, I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto men, and blasphemies where-with soever they blaspheme, but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost; hath never forgiveness; but is in danger of eternal damnation; because they said he hath an unclean spirit.* The occasion of Christ's telling the Scribes, that the sin against the Holy Ghost, was a sin that should never have forgiveness, was this, *Because they said he had an unclean spirit:* Whenas they could not but be convinced by his Doctrine and his Works that he was a holy man. Hear what *Grotius* saith upon the place: *Hæc comminatione usus est Christus, qui videbat illos agnoscere intra se vim divinam; sed invidia & odio comminisci calumnias, ut plebem averterent atque ita quod Dixerat, diabolo ascribere.*

5. Enquire into the lives and conversations of these men, before you pass such hard censures upon them; and if you go to the places where they have lived, you shall find them well reported of for good Works. In the Colledges where they were Students, and many of them Fellows;

you shall find they were sober, peaceable, of good behaviour, trained up Pupils that were committed to their trust carefully and faithfully, and have left a good name behind them. If you enquire in the places where they exercised their Ministry, you shall find they Preached sound Doctrine, were of an exemplary conversation, lived peaceably with all men, had the hearts and affections of their people; and in their sufferings have exercised much patience and contentation: And what ground then is there for your loading them with reproaches?

Plz. 2. These men are not obedient to authority, but meet together to Preach and Pray contrary to the Laws of the Nation, and therefore we cannot look upon them as righteous men; but we count them rebels, and think we ought to do what we can to suppress them. We do not persecute them for Praying and Preaching, God forbid we should be so wicked. But the reason why we are so eager in persecuting them, is, because they break the Laws, and are not conformable to the Service and Ceremonies of the Church.

Ans. 1. It hath been an old device of Satan and his instruments, to raise up, and cast slanders upon men fearing God; as though they were rebellious persons, and disobedient to Laws, when they have been employed in the Service of God. When *Nehemiah* went about to build the wall of *Jerusalem*; the adversaries of the Jews gave out words, that he was about to rebel against the King, *Neh.* 2. 19. *What is this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the King?* So when the Ministers Preach for no other end, but to convert Souls, and build up such as are converted; their adversaries give out they are rebels against the King. The like accusation was raised against the Apostles, when they Preached the Gospel up and down the world; their enemies represented them, to be such as walked contrary to the decrees of *Cesar*, *Act.* 17. 6, 7. *Those that have turned the world upside down, are come hither also; whom Jason hath received, and these all do contrary to the decrees of Cesar.* And more particularly against the Apostle *Paul*, *Act.* 18. 12, 13. *The Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment-seat; saying, This fellow persuadeth to worship God contrary to the Law.* *Act.* 21. 28. *Men of Israel, help; this is the man that teacheth all men every-where, against the people, and the Law, and this place.* *Daniel* was a man so eminent for Piety, that he is ranked with *Noah* and *Job*, who had great power with God in Prayer, *Ezek.* 14. 14. He had an Angel sent to him from Heaven, who told him he was a man greatly beloved of God, *Dan.* 10. 11. He was so blameless, that his enemies that sought occasion against him, could find no fault with him, *Dan.* 6. 3. Yet this *Daniel* was accused for not regarding the King, and his Laws, *v.* 13. *Daniel regardeth not thee, Oh King, nor the decree that thou hast signed.* This was the device *Haman* made use of against the Jews. He accused them to the King for breaking the Laws, *Est.* 3. 8. *Their Laws are diverse from all people, neither keep they the King's Laws; therefore it is not for the King's profit to suffer them.*

2. The worst of men have had pretences for their vilest practices. The Jews that went about to stone Christ, would not own it, that they stoned him for a good work, but pretended it was for blasphemy, *Joh.* 10. 32, 33.

Jesus

*Jesus answered them, many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of these works do you stone me? The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy, and because that thou being a man, makest thyself God. As the Jews ignorantly or maliciously called Christ's preaching blasphemy, and pretended they would have stoned him; not for a good work, but for blasphemy: So the Informers either ignorantly or maliciously call these mens preaching rebellion, and say they do not persecute them for preaching, but for rebellion against the Laws. They that cast out their brethren that trembled at God's Word, pretended God's glory; but the Lord saw that action proceeded from malice and hatred, *Is. 66. 5. Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his word; your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name sake, said, the Lord be glorified. But he shall appear to your joy and their shame.**

3. To represent these Ministers as disobedient to authority, and rebellious persons, is a grievous calumny, and a great wrong to them: It is contrary to their professed and declared principles, and contrary to their practice. For they believe and teach that every Soul ought to be subject to the higher Powers, and the Powers that be, are ordained of God. And therefore they obey Magistrates not only to avoid their wrath, but for Conscience sake. And for further evidence of the soundness of their judgment in this point of obeying Magistrates, they do fully concur with, and are ready to subscribe, if called to it, unto the seven and thirtieth Article of the Church of *England*, which treats of the civil Magistrate. And if at any time it so fall out that the command of the Magistrate be contrary to the commands of God, if in such a case they choose to obey God rather than men, they are not upon this account to be called rebels and contumacious persons. For,

1. This was the practice of the Apostles, to obey God rather than men, *Act. 14. 19. Whether it be right in the sight of God, to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.* And in so doing, they did no more than what was their duty to do, *Act. 5. 29. We ought to obey God rather than men.*

2. When the Midwives were commanded by *Pharaoh* to do that which was contrary to the command of God; it was not rebellion in them to go against the command of *Pharaoh*. But this action of theirs did proceed from the fear of God, *Exod. 1. 17. But the Midwives feared God, and did not as the King commanded.*

3. The Magistrate is the Minister of God for good, *Rom. 13. 4.* He is but the Minister of God, and the Minister of God for good; that is, all that he enjoys must be for God's honour, and for a publick good. If he command any thing contrary to the command of Christ, and we obey him; we exalt him above God, we prefer the Servant before the Master.

4. These men are more obedient to Authority, and truer Subjects than many of their adversaries that reproach them with disloyalty, and rebellion. For many of those men that cry out against these Ministers for their disobedience to the Laws, make no scruple of breaking such Laws of God and men, as are contrary to their lusts. There are good Laws established in this Nation, against Swearing, Drunkenness, Symony, &c. yet many that are

common Swearers, Drunkards, and live in other vices condemned by the Laws of God, the Laws of the Nation, and the light of their own Consciences, cry up themselves for obedient Subjects, and cry out against Ministers for not conforming to such things as they are not satisfied are lawful for them to do; which have been for many years, and still are controverted among learned men, not only of this, but of other Nations; and which they profess could they be satisfied in their Consciences of their lawfulness they would yield obedience to them.

5. As for those that complain of these Ministers preaching contrary to the command of the Magistrate; I would put them in mind of the strict command that God hath given to those whom he hath called to the work and office of the Ministry to Preach the Gospel as they will answer the neglect thereof to himself, and his Son Jesus Christ at the day of Judgment, *2 Tim. 4. 1, 2. I charge thee therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the quick and the dead at his appearing, and his Kingdom. Preach the word, be instant in season, and out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and patience. 1 Cor. 9. 15. Yea, wo is unto me if I preach not the Gospel.* Now if men forbid that which God commands, whom are we to obey, God or men? If any say this charge was given to *Timothy*, and that wo was pronounced against *Paul*; and that is nothing to these men: if these men had a charge from God to preach as *Timothy* and *Paul* had, we should not dare to oppose or hinder their preaching. I answer, This charge that was given to *Timothy* to preach the word, doth and will concern all Ministers of the Gospel to the worlds end, as well as it did him. As that promise given to *Joshua*, *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee*, is interpreted by the Holy Ghost to be spoken to all Christians, to the end of the world, *Josh. 1. 5.* compared with *Hib. 13. 5.* So this command given to *Timothy*, who was a Minister of the Gospel, concerns all the Ministers of the Gospel in all places, and all ages of the world. What was spoken to the Apostles as they were Christians, belongs to all Christians, *Mark 13. 37. And what I say unto you, I say unto all, watch.* And what was spoken to them as Ministers of the Gospel belongs to all Ministers as well as unto them.

6. As for them that charge these men with sin, yea with rebellion for Praying and Preaching contrary to Law, I would mind them of the examples of *Daniel* and the Apostles. There was a royal Law made by all the Presidents of the Kingdom, the Governours, the Princes, the Counsellors, and Captains under a very great penalty, That no man should ask a Petition of any God or Man, for the space of thirty days, save of the King, and this decree was signed by *Darius* the King, *Dan. 6. 7, 8.* yet when *Daniel* knew this decree was signed, he prayed three times a day, as his usual custom was, and did not omit the opening of the windows in the time of Prayer, *v. 10.* Now when *Daniel* knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house, and his windows being open in his chamber towards Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as at other times. What think ye? Did *Daniel* sin against God, and rebel against the King in praying contrary to the decree? If you think *Daniel* sinned in giving such an example to after-ages, to pray contrary to a decree made with such a penalty; or if you think he sinned that he kept his

his wonted times, and would not so far comply with the decree, as to forbear for a few days, or that he did not take other hours, or that he would not shut his windows, or pray so secretly and privately as none but his own Family should know of it; you may be convinced of your mistake from *v. 22.* *My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the Lions mouth, that they have not hurt me; soasmuch as before him innocency was found in me, and also before thee, O King. have I done no hurt.* It is evident from these words, that Daniel's Praying to God in his usual manner, contrary to the decree, was no sin either against God, or the King. And is not Prayer a Duty now as well as in Daniel's time? The Apostles had a strict charge from the rulers of the Jews not to Preach in the name of Jesus Christ, *Act. 4. 17, 18.* *Let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name. And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all, nor teach in the name of Jesus.* That this command to forbear Preaching, was given by the Rulers, we may see *v. 5, 6.* yet after this strict charge and severe command given by the rulers to the Apostles to cease Preaching, they were as diligent as before in Preaching of the Gospel, *Act. 5. 27, 28.* *And when they had brought them, they set them before the Council, and the High-Priest asked them, saying, Did not we straitly command you, that you should not teach in this name, and behold, you have filled Jerusalem with your Doctrine.* And after they had been beaten for Preaching the Gospel, and had received a new command, not to speak in the name of the Lord Jesus; They continued to take all opportunities to teach and preach Jesus Christ, both in the Temple and every House, *ver. 40, 41, 42.* *when they had called the Apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the Temple and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.* Did the Apostles sin against God, or rebel against their rulers, for preaching the Gospel, when they were straitly charged by their rulers not to Preach, and beaten because they did not obey the command, and another command given them after that to leave Preaching, and yet they proceeded in their work? If any shall say or think the Apostles did sin in so doing, all good Christians will condemn their rash judgment, and they may easily be refuted from *Act. 4. 29.* After they had been commanded to cease preaching, and threatened, they Pray to God to assist them to preach the word with boldness. *And now, Lord, behold their threatenings; and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness, they may speak thy word.* And they would not pray for assistance in that which was sinful. And their boldness in preaching after their prohibition from the rulers of the Jews, is ascribed to their being filled with the Holy Ghost, *v. 31.* *They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and spake the word with boldness.* And that man is a blasphemer, who shall say, the Apostles sinned in preaching against the command of their rulers; whereas it was the Holy Ghost which gave them boldness to preach the Word of God. Besides, they were encouraged to preach, after their rulers had forbidden them, and had imprisoned them for preaching contrary to their commands, by an Angel that was sent from Heaven, that opened the Prison-doors, and said unto them, *Go and stand, and speak in the temple to the people all the*

words of this life, A&T. 5. 9, 20. And when they were again brought before the rulers, and examined whether they did not know of that strict charge they had given them, and were taxed with the disobeying their command, Did not we straitly command you; that you should not teach in this name, and behold you have filled Jerusalem with your Doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us? They justified their preaching, though they had disobeyed their rulers commands, v. 29. *Toten Peter, and the other Apostles answered and said, we ought to obey God, rather than man.*

Obj. Though the Apostles preached the Gospel when commanded by the rulers to forbear preaching, these Ministers must not follow their example.

Ans. 1. If all Christians are not to imitate the Apostles, in what they did as Christians; and the Ministers of the Gospel to imitate and follow their example in what they did as Ministers; what is the meaning of those places in the Epistle to the Pastors and Saints at Philippi? Phil. 3. 17. *Brethren, be ye followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as you have us for an example.* And Ch. 4. 9. *These things which ye have both learned, received, and heard and seen in me, do; and the God of peace shall be with you.* And of that command 1 Cor. 11. 1. *Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.*

2. Dr. *Sanderſon* brings in *Daniel's* praying against the Law, and the Apostles preaching contrary to the command of the rulers to prove this conclusion, *Leges humane injuste non obligant ad obediendum*; Humane Laws if unjust, oblige not to obedience. And justifies *Daniel's* praying, and the Apostles preaching, though both acted contrary to the Law with this reason; *Nimirum, quia utroque, que prohibebantur erant res necessariae; illis cultus veri dei, hic concedita ipsis Evangelii praedicatio*: Because in both cases the things which were forbidden, were necessary Duties; In *Daniel's* case, the worship of the true God; in the Apostles case, the preaching of the Gospels which was committed to them. I conceive the same reason will justify the praying and preaching of these men (if the Informers were able to prove there were Laws forbidding the same) for praying and preaching are *Res necessariae*, now as well as in *Daniel's* and the Apostles times. And it cannot be denied but their worship is *cultus veri Dei*, and that they being true Ministers of Jesus Christ, *Concedita est ipsis Evangelii praedicatio.*

7. I would ask these clamorous persons that do cry out of these Ministers for praying and preaching contrary to the Laws of the Nation; and thereupon charge them with disobeying Magistrates, and rebellion against the Law, what they judge of Dr. *Taylor's* assertion in his *Ductor dubitantium*, lib. 3. p. 32. Every Law made against Religion, or any thing of divine Sanction and Commandment, is void, and cannot oblige the Conscience. And pag. 34. *All such things as are against the good of the Subjects, the Law it self declares to be no Law, that is; more than the Superiour hath right or leave to do.* Now is there not a divine Sanction for praying and preaching; is not praying to God in the Name of Christ, and preaching the Gospel whereby men may be saved, for the good of the subject? If these men do nothing but what is agreeable to the Laws of God, and what is for a publick good, they are not to be charged as transgressors of the Laws. Hear also what Dr. *Sanderſon* saith concerning obedience to such Laws as are cross to the Laws of God.

God. *Quicquid legi Dei, aut natura lumine nota, & cordibus inscripta; aut in verbo Scripto revelata adversatur, non est ob quodcumque, vel detrimentum proprium, vel proximo scandalum, vel prelati sive gratiam promovendam, vel declinandum odium, vere Christiano admittendum.* Da veniam, Imperator, tu carcerem, ille gehennam: Sic olim veteres illi Christiani. Whatsoever is contrary to the Law of God, either manifest by the light of Nature, and graven in the heart, or revealed in the Scriptures, a Christian must not yield to, for avoiding any hurt whatsoever to himself, or for preventing the scandal of others, or for the gaining the favour, or avoiding the displeasure of his Superiour. The Christians of old were wont to say to the Emperor, when his command did cross the command of God; Excuse me, Sir, you may cast us into Prison, but God can cast us into Hell. Both these Authors were great casuists, and speak as highly for obeying Authority as most men; they were both Bishops, the one in England, the other in Ireland, (neither to be suspected of any favour to Non-conformists, that might in the least sway them to speak in favour of their cause) yet both agree that such Laws as are contrary to the Laws of God, or to the publick good, do not oblige the Conscience. But that praying to God in the name of Jesus Christ, for things agreeable to the Will of God, and Preaching the Gospel, are Duties commanded in the Word of God, and that they tend to a publick good, is so plain in the Holy Scriptures, that he that runneth may read of.

8. In cases of necessity, the Ceremonial Law was dispensed with, and they that transgressed the Law, were accounted guiltless. It was not lawful for any man excepting the Priests to eat of the Shewbread, others were forbid to eat thereof by the Law of Moses; yet in a case of necessity, David and they that were with him, did eat of that bread contrary to the Law of Moses, and yet were guiltless, Matt. 12. 3, 4. *Have ye not read what David did when he was an hungred, and they that were with him; how he entred into the house of God, and did eat the Shewbread which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them that were with him, but only for the Priests.* Hence I would argue thus: If David in the case of necessity transgressed the Ceremonial Law, which was a divine Law, and yet was not charged with guilt; then if these men in a case of greater necessity transgress an humane Law (about Ceremonies and Religious Rites) they are no more culpable than David was. To clear this, let it be considered,

1. The saving of lost Souls, and feeding hungry Souls with the bread of life is a greater good, and a more necessary work than giving Shewbread to David, and his companions when they were hungry.

2. The Ceremonial Law was of divine Institution, the Law that requirith conformity to the Ceremonies now in use, is but an humane Law: And there is greater reverence due unto divine than humane Laws.

3. There was no dispute among the Jews whether the Ceremonial Law was to be observed by them; they knew, and did believe that Moses received it from God; but the lawfulness of conformity hath been of a long time, and still is a disputable point; many Learned and Holy men are not satisfied therein.

Obj. But there is no necessity of these mens Preaching, (if their Preaching were necessary, we should have nothing to say against it) but the people may hear the Word Preached from conformable Ministers, and therefore their Preaching is needless.

Ans. 1. The Preaching of these men is necessary in respect of the command of God; which hath laid a necessity upon those that are called to the office and work of the Ministry to preach the Gospel, 1 Cor. 9. 16. *For necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel. Every man that hath received talents from the Lord must occupy these talents in the place and station God hath set him in; till the Lord takes him off from his work, Luk. 19. 13. He called his ten servants, and delivered unto them ten pounds, and said unto them, occupy till I come.*

2. The preaching of God's Word is of greater necessity than our necessary food, and if we be of *Job's* mind, we shall esteem it so, *Job. 23. 12. I have esteemed the word of thy mouth, more than my necessary food.*

3. *Ahimilech* might have answered *David* in the like manner; *David*, though thou art hungry, there is no necessity I should give thee the Shewbread, there are houses enough, where there is bread enough, and to spare, whither thou may'st go, and be welcom; and yet neither *Ahimilech* is reproved, nor *David* for receiving the Shewbread.

4. The great ignorance, the growth of Atheisme, Prophaneness, Popery and other dangerous errors in this Nation, sheweth a necessity of all the Ministers in the Nation, both *Conformists*, and *Non-conformists*, (if there were twice as many as there are) to lay out themselves to the utmost in preaching the Gospel.

9. Whereas the *Informers* plead they do not persecute these Ministers for praying and preaching, but for breaking the Laws of the Nation; this is but a vain excuse: For,

1. The work you find these men about, is no other work but praying to God in the Name of Jesus Christ, for things agreeable to his Will; and preaching the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, or some other religious exercise, and for these things you inform against them.

2. If you found these men assembled at a Tavern with Bottles of Wine eating and drinking, and making merry, you would not molest them; or if you found them at a play-house, to see a Comedy Acted, you would not molest them; or if they were at a Coffee-house reading a Gazette, hearing or telling of news; or if you found them assembled at a Dancing-School, or at a Fair or Market to buy or sell, you would let them alone; but if you find them praying or preaching, you then make what haste you can to suppress their Meetings, and to incense the Magistrate against them. And yet will you say, you do not persecute these men for praying and preaching?

3. If it be your zeal for the Law that carries you out; why do you not inform against Whore-mongers, Drunkards, Swearers, Sabbath-breakers, and other prophane Sinners, who break the Laws of God and men? yea, why do you not pull the beam out of your own eyes (and inform the Magistrate your selves one of another, for the crimes against the Law that

you are well-known to be guilty of) before you go to pluck the mote out of these mens eyes ?

4. Whether those men break the Law in preaching and praying, as you pretend, shall be enquired in answer to another of your Pleas.

Plea 3. If these men would conform or leave preaching we would not molest them.

Ans. 1. Though these men cannot conform to those things which are imposed and required of such as enjoy Ecclesiastical promotions in this Nation; yet the *Informers* ought not to persecute them for preaching the Gospel, though they be such as have a great zeal for conformity: For several Reasons.

1. Preaching the Gospel is of greater necessity, than conformity to the Ceremonies, which are acknowledged by the greatest Patrons of them to be but indifferent things.

2. Following Christ and his Disciples was of greater consequence than conformity to that which is imposed on such as enjoy Ecclesiastical promotions; yet when *John* saw one casting out Devils, and out of his zeal to Christ forbade him, Christ reproved him for it, *Luk. 9. 49.* And *John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out Devils in thy name, and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us; and Jesus said, Forbid him not; for he that is not against us, is for us.*

3. These men cannot conform to the Ceremonies, and those other things which are imposed on publick Ministers without sin. For suppose these men were under a mistake, and there was nothing required, but what was lawful; yet they judging these things unlawful, they cannot comply with them without sin, *Rom. 14. 14.* *To him that esteemeth any thing unclean, to him it is unclean.*

4. These men conform to the Law of God, and to the Doctrine of the Church; though they do not conform to the Ceremonies of the Church, whereas many that conform to the Ceremonies of the Church are of debauched conversations, and live in the transgression of the Laws of God, and some are of corrupt judgments. And the zeal of the *Informers* should carry them out rather against such as corrupt the Doctrine, than those that scruple the Ceremonies of the Church (for the Doctrine of the Church, is of more value than all the Ceremonies, that being of a divine Revelation, these of humane invention; that being of necessity to Salvation, these being as the chief Patrons of them contend only for order and decency in the worship of God) and against such as transgress the Laws of God, rather than those that transgress (as they say) the Laws of men.

2. Whereas the *Informers* would have these men leave Preaching, they cannot do so, unless they would bring upon themselves the curse of God and of men. There is a wo from God against such as are called to preach the Gospel, and yet neglect it, *1 Cor. 9. 16.* *Yea, wo is me if I preach not the Gospel.* And men would curse them also, *Prov. 11. 26.* *He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him; But blessing shall be upon the head of him that selleth it.* The mystical sence of this Proverb, several interpreters understand of such as withhold the publishing of the Word, they will bring a curse upon themselves; but they that dispense it faithfully, shall receive

a blessing, *De Doctrina & cibo animarum intelligi potest juxta mysticum sensum, qui abscondit talentum, & non pascit gregem sibi commissum; Maledictus est, R. B. ym.* Samuel thought he should sin, if he should cease praying for, and instructing the people, 1 Sam. 12. 13. *Morrower, as for me, God forbid, I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you, but I will teach you the good and the right way;* yet the Elders of Israel had rejected Samuel from bearing rule over them, 1 Sam. 8. 3, 7. So these men though they have been cast out of their possessions, and from their publick places, they should sin against the Lord, if they should cease praying for, and instructing the people, when the Providence of God puts opportunities into their hands, of praying with them, and teaching them the good ways of the Lord.

Plea 4. If these men can't satisfy their Consciences without preaching, let them preach in their Families, and to four or five more of their Neighbours; and in so doing they shall fulfil the Law of God, and not transgress the Laws of the Nation; and then we will not molest them, but we cannot bear their numerous meetings.

Ans. Several Reasons may be given why these men do not content themselves, nor can be satisfied in Conscience to preach only to their own Families, and four or five more of their Neighbours. I will mention three or four.

1. Their commission runs to preach the Gospel to every creature that is willing to hear them, *Mark 16. 15. Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.* Their commission is not limited to their Families, but reacheth every place, where God calls them; neither to a few persons, but to every creature that is willing to be taught by them.

2. They are commanded as they have opportunity, to do good to all men, *Gal. 6. 10. As we have opportunity, let us do good to all men.* And they account the greatest good they are able to do for any persons, is to preach the Gospel to them; Spiritual alms are to be extended as far as those which concern the outward-man: And the command there to such as have ability, is, *Give a portion to seven, and also to eight. Luk. 6. 30. Give to every man that asketh of thee.*

3. Our Lord Jesus taught all that resorted to him; though they came in great multitudes, *Mark 2. 13. All the multitude resorted to him, and he taught them: Mark 10. 1. And the people resort unto him again, and as he was wont he taught them again.* And when the Apostle Paul preached in his own hired house, he received all that came to him, and forbade none, *Act. 28. 30. Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came unto him, and preached the Kingdom of God.* And we are to imitate our Lord Jesus and his Apostles. Our Lord Jesus was so far from forbidding multitudes resorting to him, that the more people came to him, the more his bowels of compassion were moved towards them, and the more pains he took to instruct them, *Mark 6. 31. And Jesus when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion towards them; because they were as sheep not having a shepherd, and he began to teach them many things.* Should these men shut up their bowels of compassion, and shut their doors; when

when they see much people resorting to them, How should they be of the same mind, and the same Spirit that was in Jesus Christ?

4. The more they preach to, the more Souls are like to be saved by their Ministry. And it is the duty of a Minister of the Gospel to save as many Souls as he can, from eternal destruction. The Apostle Paul was willing to preach to all, and to carry himself as a Servant to all, that he might gain the more, 1 Cor. 9. 19. *Though I be free from all men, yet I have made my self a servant to all, that I might gain the more.*

Plea 5. We have a Law for what we do, when we inform against these men, and cause them to be fined, and their Meetings to be broken up; we do nothing, but what is according to the Law: And therefore we hope we do not do evil in persecuting these men, and suppressing their Meetings.

Ans. 1. Suppose you had a Law for what you do, yet that would not justify your actions, nor excuse your sin. The Jews pretended they had a Law to put Christ to death; and that by that Law, he not only might, but ought to be put to death, Job. 19. 7. *The Jews answered him, we have a Law, and by our Law he ought to die; because he made himself the Son of God.* Yet for putting Christ to death, the vengeance of God fell upon them and hath continued upon their posterity in a most dreadful and amazing manner, above sixteen hundred years. Paul had authority to disturb the Meetings of the Disciples, and imprison them; he had a commission from the High Priest to imprison all of that way, which was cried out against in those days, as much as Non-conformists are in these days, Acts. 9. 1, 2. *And Saul yet breathing out threatnings and slaughter against the Disciples of the Lord, went unto the High Priest, and desired of him Letters unto the Synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.* And v. 14. *And here he hath authority to bind all that call upon thy name.* And yet notwithstanding his Letters and authority, Jesus Christ cries out of him as guilty of persecution, v. 4: *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* The Israelites had Statutes of Omri to plead for the worshipping the Golden Calves, yet that did not secure them from God's judgments, but he threatens them with desolation for their sin, Micah 6. 13, 16. *Therefore also will I make thee sick in smiting thee, in making thee desolate in smiting thee.* For the Statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab, and ye walk in their counsels, that I should make thee a desolation; and the Inhabitants thereof an hissing. Ephraim had a Commandment from Jeroboam to worship the Golden Calves, yet this did not excuse Ephraim's Sin; but God wasted Ephraim with secret and open judgments, for walking willingly after that commandment; being both as a Moth and a Lion to Ephraim, Hos. 4. 11. *Ephraim is oppressed and broken in judgment; because he willingly walked after the commandment; Therefore will I be unto Ephraim as a moth, and to the house of Judah as rottenness.* The commandment that Ephraim walked willingly after, for which he is thus threatened, as also v. 14, is by most interpreters, both ancient and modern, understood of the commandment that Jeroboam gave the ten Tribes concerning the Golden Calves; as Rivet notes on the place. *Hebraei interpretes & nostrorum plerique id referunt ad mandatum Jeroboam de colendis vitulis, & altariis nobis erigendis.*

The Papists that burnt the Martyrs, plead Law for what they did; yet all Protestants abhor and condemn their bloody practices.

2. A man may execute the Law, and yet be a sinner in the sight of God, if that which he doth, be done from an evil principle, or for an evil end; As for instance; Though you should do nothing against these men, but what is according to Law; yet if your actions against them proceed from malice or hatred, or from a covetous principle to get their estates, or from enmity against Religion, or any such like evil principle; your actions are abominable in the sight of God. When *Jehu* destroyed the house of *Ahab*, he did that which was agreeable to the Law of God, he did according to all that was in the heart of God, 1 King. 10. 30. yet because *Jehu's* heart was not right in the sight of God, because he sought his own ends, and not the glory of God in what he did, he was guilty of blood in the sight of God; And God threatned to avenge the blood of the house of *Ahab*, which was shed in *Jezebel* upon the house of *Jehu*, Hof. 1. 4, *I will avenge the blood of Jezebel upon the house of Jehu*. By the blood of *Jezebel* understand *Ahab's* 70 Sons, which were slain at *Jehu's* appointment by the Rulers of *Jezebel*, and all the remainder of *Ahab's* house, whom *Jehu* slew in *Jezebel*, 2 K. 8. 10. 1, 7, 11. Now if a man may fulfil the Law of God, and yet fall under the vengeance of God, for doing what God commands, for corrupt and sinful ends; then much more may a man execute the Laws of men, and thereby incur displeasure of Almighty God, for making use of, and prosecuting that Law from evil principles, and for sinful and corrupt ends.

3. The Law which *Informers* make use of to persecute these men, is capable of such an interpretation, as it will not touch these men or their Meetings. For,

1. If the body of the Act be to be interpreted by the title of the Act (as one would think it should, the title representing the design and main purport of the Act, as the Contents of a Chapter does set out the chief things in the Chapter), These men are not at all concerned in this Act. For it's Intituled, *An Act to prevent and suppress seditious Conventicles*: For they come not at any seditious Conventicles; they abhor such Conventicles as much as these *Informers*, or any other men. For they know and teach according to the Scripture, That sedition is a work of the flesh, which will exclude men from the Kingdom of God, as well as envyings and murders, drunkenness and revellings, or other such like sins, Gal. 5. 20, 21. And if an *Informers* shall call an Assembly of men fearing God, who meet together for no other end but to pray to God, in the Name of Jesus Christ, or Preach and Hear the Word of God, or other Religious exercises, a seditious Conventicle, he seemeth to me to be either an ignorant or malicious man.

2. If the Law be to be interpreted by the Preface to the Act; neither will that concern the Meetings of these men. The Preface is this, "For providing further and more speedy remedies against the growing and dangerous practice of seditious Sectaries, and other disloyal persons, who under pretence of tender Consciences, have or may at their Meetings contrive insurrections; as late experience hath shewn. This Preface doth not in any of its branches concern these Ministers called *Non-conformists*: They are not seditious Sectaries, for they are of the same Faith with the Church of England; and Preach peace, and

and labour as much as in them lyes to live peaceably with all men. They are no disloyal persons, for they honour the King, and pray for him, both in their Closets, Families, and Assemblies. There are no dangerous practices at their Meetings; for when they meet together they pray to God, they read the Holy Scriptures, they preach sound Doctrine, they praise God in singing Psalms, they give Alms, these are no dangerous practices. They are none of those, that at their Meetings contrive insurrections, as experience shews: For no instance that I have heard of, hath been of any such contrivance, for the long space of time since they were cast out of their livings, a good proof of their peaceableness; Besides, they have Women and Children at their Meetings, yea, and persons they know not, and that is not the manner of them that meet to contrive insurrections. Some may say, though neither the Title nor the Preface do reach these men and their Meetings, yet the Act it self doth; for it concerneth those that shall be present at any Assembly or Conventicle, or Meeting, under colour or pretence of any exercise of Religion in other manner than according to the Liturgy and practice of the Church of England. To which I answer, still this relates to those that are present at Religious exercises under a colour or pretence, and so it doth not reach them who meet together for no other end, but to worship God, and edifie their own Souls; but only reaches such as use Religious exercises for a pretence and colour to carry on some evil designs, which cannot be proved against these men.

But the most material passage in this Act which is made use of to suppress the Assemblies of these men, is this, *It is pretended their exercises of Religion are in other manner than according to the Liturgy, and the practice of the Church of England.* And therefore this must now be enquired into; which if these Reformers did rightly understand, and would put on charity, and did fear an oath, they would be very fearful to persecute these men, or cause them to be fined and molested upon a pretence that their meeting is in other manner than according to the Liturgy, and the practice of the Church of England. Before I answer this, I would premise one passage out of Dr. *Jer. Taylor*, late Bishop of Down and Conner, about the interpretation of the Laws, lib. 3. pag. 31. *It's observable that all Laws do infinitely decline all harsh senses; and are ambitious of gentle and benign interpretations.* If this rule of interpreting Laws be granted, and practised, I doubt not but the *Non-conformists* and their Meetings will be exempted from the penalties of this Act.

To clear this more particularly, Let it be considered, whether these mens prayings be in other manner than according to the Liturgy; to this end let me tell you in what manner these men pray, they pray to the Almighty God that made Heaven and Earth, who is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. They pray to this God in the Name of Jesus Christ, and make use of no other Mediatour besides our Lord Jesus. They pray for things agreeable to the Will of God. They pray to God in a known tongue, which is understood by those that joyn with them. They lift up their hearts, as well as their hands to God in the Heavens. The glory of God is that which they aim at in all their prayers. And are not all these things according to the Liturgy of the Church of England? Doth not the Liturgy direct prayer to be made to the true God? Are not the Prayers of the Liturgy agreeable to the Will of God? Are not the Prayers of the Liturgy offered up to God in the Name of Christ, and in a

known tongue, and for the glory of God? Did you find these men praying to *Jupiter*, or any of the Gods of the Heathen: Did you hear them blaspheme Jesus Christ as the Jews do in their Synagogues: Did you find them praying in an unknown tongue; or praying to the Saints or Virgin *Mary*, as the *Papists* do; or did you find them praying for unlawful things, you had some colour to inform against them as transgressors of this act. What is there then in these mens Prayers, that make you judge them to be in other manner than according to the Liturgy; which in your apprehension makes them transgressors of the Law? It may be you will say, They do not use that form of Prayer which is prescribed in the Liturgy, but they pray in other words. To which I answer, They may be truly said to pray after the same manner, though they use not the same words: For, our Lord Jesus Christ gave his Disciples a form or pattern to direct them how to pray, and bid them pray after that manner that he had taught them, *Matt. 6. 9. After this manner therefore pray ye, Our Father which art in Heaven*: And we find some of their Prayers recorded, as *Act. 1. 24, 25. Act. 4. 23*. Yet in neither of these, nor any other place, do we read that they used that form of Prayer which our Lord Jesus taught them; but their Prayers were put up to God in other words. Now I would demand of these *Informers*, Did the Apostles transgress the commandment of Christ, and pray in other manner than Christ directed, when they used not that form of words which are contained in the Lords Prayers, but prayed in other words? I suppose they will be ashamed to say the Apostles transgressed the command, and prayed in other manner than he enjoined them. If they should be so audacious as to charge the Apostles with the breach of Christ's command for praying in other words; they may be refuted from that gracious answer, which God gave to their Prayers, by filling them all with the Holy Ghost, after they had prayed to him, *Act. 4. 31*. If they will grant the Apostles did not pray in other manner than Christ directed, though they used other words, and so were no transgressors of Christ's command. Then I reply, Why then do these *Informers* persecute, and persecute these Ministers as transgressors of this Act, pretending that in their Meetings they pray in other manner, than according to the Liturgy; when all that is requisite to make a Prayer acceptable to God, is found in these mens Prayers, as well as in the Prayers in the Liturgy? These mens Prayers are offered up to the same God, by the same Mediatour, by the help of the same Spirit; for things agreeable to the Will of God; and for the honour and glory of God, as well as the Prayers prescribed in the Liturgy.

But besides what hath been said already, there may be one thing more added, which will exempt these men from being guilty of exercising any Acts of Religion in other manner than according to the Liturgy of the Church of *England*, and that is this; The Liturgy of the Church of *England*, includes all those portions of the Holy Scripture, which are appointed to be read for the first and second Lesson for the Morning and Evening Service throughout the whole year, together with what is read for the Epistles and Gospels. And whatever Religious exercise is allowed of by these, by those portions of Scripture appointed to be read by the Liturgy for the Morning or Evening Service; that Religious exercise is not performed in other manner than according to the Liturgy of the Church of *England*. And if all those portions of Scripture

be part of the Liturgy (which I suppose none will deny) it will be ease proving, that there is nothing done at these Assemblies, but what is agreeable to the Scriptures used in the Liturgy; I will touch but upon one or two places. On *July* the 18th, for the second Lesson at the Evening Service is appointed to be read, *1 Tim. 2.* and there, praying in houses, and in every other place is allowed of as well as in Temples, so it be done in an holy manner, *v. 8, I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up ho'y hands without wrath and doubting.* And *June* the 30th, for the second Lesson is appointed *Eph. 6,* and there the Apostle alloweth of all manner of Prayer, so it be in the Spirit, *v. 18, Praying always with all Prayers, and Supplication in the Spirit:* So that all manner of Prayer at what time or place soever it be made, if it be Prayer in the Spirit, is allowed by the Scriptures appointed to be read by the Liturgy, and so is not in other manner than according to the Liturgy. Many more instances might be given to prove the Religious exercises of these men to be in such manner as agreeth with the Scriptures prescribed to be read by the Liturgy; but I shall add no more.

Now let us consider whether these mens exercises of Religion be in other manner than according to the practise of the Church of *England.* If they had no benefit by the former clause (which as before explained, is for their advantage, though made use of to suppress them) yet they have protection from the penalty of the Law, as I conceive, by this clause, *The practise of the Church of England.* To clear this, let it be considered,

1. What is the Church of *England*? The best way to know this, is to consider the Doctrine of the Church of *England*, declared in the 39 Articles; and there the Church is thus defined, *Art. 19,* "The Visible Church of Christ, is a Congregation of faithful men, in the which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly administered according to Christ's Ordinance, and in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same. And if this be a true description of the Church of *England* (which they that own the Articles, I think should not deny) then these *Non-conformists* are a considerable part of the Church of *England.* For they are faithful men, men that believe on the Lord Jesus Christ (which I suppose is meant by faithful men); in their Congregations the Word of God is preached in truth and purity, the Sacraments are duly administered according to Christ's Ordinance, in all things that of necessity are requisite to the same. If these *Non-conformists* be not a part of the Church of *England,* How, and when, and by whom were they excommunicated and cast out of the Church? If any say they do not comply with the Discipline and Ceremonies of the Church, I answer:

1. In that definition which is given of the Church in the 19th Article, there is nothing mentioned of the Discipline or Ceremonies: As Mr. Rogers observes in his Exposition of the 39 Articles, dedicated to the Arch-bishop of *Canterbury*; His words are these, *Some (and they, many of them very godly men) add Ecclesiastical Discipline for a note of the Visible Church; but because the said Discipline in part is included in the marks here mentioned; both we, and in effect, all well-ordered Churches, over-pass it in this place, as no taken simply of the Visible Church.*

2. The Church of *England* is not founded upon the Ceremonies or the Discipline; but it is built upon the foundation of the Prophets and Apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone: And upon this foundation do these

these *Non-conformist* Ministers build as well as the *Conformable Clergy*; and therefore are of the Church of *England* as well as they. And if the *Non-conformists* be a considerable part of the Church of *England*, how can these *Informers* swear their Religious exercises are in other manner than according to the practise of the Church of *England*?

If any man will put such a harsh sense upon these words, *The practise of the Church of England*, that he will have none understood but the conformable part of the Church of *England*; Yet in this sense it may be pleaded, It is not contrary to the practise of the Church of *England*, for men that have been brought up at the University, and after their examination of their fitness for the work of the Ministry, have been ordained, and set apart thereunto with fasting and Prayer, to preach sound Doctrine, and before and after their Sermons to pray to God in the name of his Son, for things agreeable to his Will; which is the practise of these men. But if it be said it is the practise of the conformable Clergy in *England* to use the forms of Prayer prescribed by the Liturgy, which these men do not; I answer, It is the practise of the Ministers of the Church of *England* to pray with other Prayers when in their Pulpits, both before and after Sermon, than what are prescribed in the Liturgy; so that praying in other words, and in another method than what is prescribed in the Liturgy, either before or after Sermon in Publick Assemblies, as the *Non-conformists* do, is not contrary to the practise of the Church of *England*.

2. Neither is praying and preaching without having the Liturgy read to the Assembly, contrary to the practise of the Church of *England*. For at Funeral Sermons the reading of the Liturgy is often omitted. And it was the usual practise at the chiefest Church in *Cambridge*, and I suppose still is continued (where the Vice-Chancellor, Masters, and Fellows of Colledges, and other Students assemble together) to have praying and preaching both in the forenoon and afternoon every Sabbath-day, without the use of the Liturgy in that Assembly. Also when there is *Concio ad Clerum* (which is frequent in Term time) there is praying to God, and preaching his Word without the use of the Liturgy. And yet I suppose no man will say, These are none of the Church of *England*.

3. It is no crime to use different words and different methods in preaching; so they that preach, do preach sound Doctrine. And why should it be esteemed such a great crime to use different forms and Methods in Prayer, provided that they that pray, pray to one and the same God, in the name of one and the same Mediator, for things agreeable to the Will of God.

4. As for the *Informers* that plead they have Law for what they do, if this were a truth (which yet I will not grant them) I would advise them to consider how contrary their practise is to the Laws of God; I might name many instances, I will mention but two or three, *Pro. 25. 15, Lay not wait, O wicked man, against the dwelling of the righteous, spoil not his resting-place. Isa. 16. 3, 4, Hide the out-cast, bewray not him that wandreth. Let my out-casts dwell with thee Moab; be thou a covert to them from the face of the spoiler.* If *Moab* who was a stranger to the Common-wealth of *Israel*, was to shew that humanity towards the *Israelites*, when in a suffering condition, as not to bewray him that wandered; but to hide them, permit them to dwell in safety, to be a covert from the face of the spoiler: Then what shall we say to them that

that profess themselves Christians, and yet are so far from hiding and being a covert to the servants of God, that they lye in wait to betray them, and endeavour to spoil them of their goods? *Zech. 8. 12, Let none of you imagine evil in your heart against his neighbour, and love no false oath; for all these are things that I hate, saith the Lord.* When you are contriving how you may do evil to these men; you are doing that which the Lord hates. The greatness of your sin, and your contrariety to the Word of God, hath been so fully set out in the former Chapter, that I shall need to add no more on this head: only I shall mention this, The Laws by which we shall all be judged at the last day, are the Laws of God; and therefore we should do nothing here, but what we can give a good account of at the day of Judgment, *Jam. 2. 12, So speak ye, and so do ye, as they that shall be judged by the Law of Liberty.*

Plea 6. If these men would preach and meet in Churches, we would not molest them; but we hate this meeting in houses and barns, and such like places.

Ans. 1. But why should you be so much offended at preaching in houses, and other retired places, when as our Lord Jesus Christ and his Apostles preached not only in the Temple and the Synagogues, but in private houses, and ships, and other places, where the people could come conveniently to hear them. Jesus Christ preached in an house, when there was as many as the house could hold, even to the very doors, *Mark 2. 1, 2. It was noised that he was in the house. And straight-way many were gathered together, insomuch as there was no room to receive them; no, not so much as about the door; and he preached the word unto them.* He preached out of a ship, *Luk. 5. 3, He entered into one of the ships which was Simons, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the Land, and he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship.* He preached sometime upon the mountains, *Matt. 5. 1, 2, And seeing the multitudes, he got up into a mountain, and when he was set, his Disciples came unto him, and he opened his mouth and taught them.* He did not decline preaching in any place where he had an opportunity to dispense the Word. And as Jesus Christ, so also his Disciples preached in houses, as well as in the Temple, and in the Synagogues, *Act. 5. 42, And daily in the Temple and in every house, they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus Christ. Act. 20. 20, I kept back nothing from you, but have shewed you and have taught you publicly, and from house to house. For the space of two years Paul preached in his own house, and received all that came to him, and no man forbade him. Act. 28. 30, 31, And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came unto him, preaching the Kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no man forbidding him.* And sometimes their Meetings and Preachings were very private, *Gal. 2. 2. Joh. 21. 19.*

2. Could these men enjoy publick places to preach in, they would choose them rather than private houses; not that they place any holiness in them, or think the worship of God more acceptable in one place, than in another; but because of the conveniency of them. *Act. 17. 24, God that made the world and all things therein, seeing he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands.* It's the worship and worshipper that God looks at, more than the place where the worship is performed, *Joh. 4. 21, 23. It seems irrational and not candid (to say no worse) to shut these men out of the Churches, and then to reproach them and persecute them, because they preach not in Churches, but in private houses and barns, and where they best can.*

3. A stable is a more contemptible place than a dwelling-house, or barn; yet because there was no room in the Inn, our Lord Jesus was born in a stable, and laid in a manger after he was put into his swaddling-cloths, *Luk. 2. 7.* *She brought forth her first-born Son, and wrapped him in swaddling-cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the Inn.* And shall we think any place too mean for us to assemble together in, seeing our Lord Jesus humbled himself so far as to be born in a stable?

Plea 7. We cannot believe it is such a great sin as you have said, to molest and persecute these men; for if it were, we should be greatly troubled in our Conscience, and should have no quiet in our minds night nor day; but we are under no trouble of Conscience for what we do; and therefore we think we do not sin in molesting them.

Ans. 1. A man may be a great sinner, and yet have no trouble in his Conscience for his sins; yea, it may be a hard matter to convince him of his sins. Whoredom is a great sin; *whoremongers and Adulterers God will judge:* Yet Solomon speaks of some that live in this sin, and say they have done no iniquity, *Prov. 30. 20.* *Such is the way of an adulterous woman, she eateth and nipeth her mouth, and saith I have done no wickedness.* Oppression and Murder are grievous sins, yet some men have such seared Consciences, that they are no more troubled at these sins, than if they were innocent persons. *Zech. 11. 4, 5,* *Feed the flock of the Slaughter, whose possessors slay them, and hold themselves not guilty; and they that sell them say, Blessed be the Lord, I am rich.* *Jer. 2. 34, 35,* *Also in thy skirts is found the blood of the souls of the poor innocents, I have not found it upon secret search, but upon all this, yet thou sayst, because I am innocent, surely his anger shall turn from me.* To kill the Disciples of Christ is an exceeding great sin; yet some are under such a spirit of delusion, that instead of acknowledging their sin, they think they do God good Service. *Joh. 16. 2,* *They shall put you out of the Synagogues, yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think he doth God Service.*

2. It hath been already proved by many Arguments out of the Word of God, that this practise of yours is exceeding sinful, and abominable in the sight of God, and therefore if you have no terrors of Conscience for what you have done, it is because your hearts are so hardened that you are grown past feeling.

Plea 8. But if our persecuting these men were so great a sin, surely God would send some great Judgment upon us; either fire would fall from Heaven and consume us, or the earth would open its mouth, and swallow us up, or some other strange punishment would befall us; but God lets us alone, and we thrive and prosper in the world, and therefore we can't think this is such a great sin.

Ans. 1. God oft-times lets great sinners alone, and doth not punish them for their sins in this world; because he reserveth them to be punished at the day of Judgment. *2 Pet. 2. 9,* *The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust to the day of Judgment to be punished.* Job observed in his time, that there were persons that did remove the landmarks, and violently took away the flocks, and fed thereon, oppressed the Widow and the Fatherless, and grind the face of the poor, and committed other abominable sins, and yet God did not punish them for their sins, *Job 24. 2,* *to the 12.* *Some remove the Land-mark, and violently take away flocks,*
and

and said thereon. They drive away the ass of the fatherless, and take the widows out for a pledge, and yet God layeth not folly to them. And David observed of many in his time, that were great oppressors and afflictors of Gods people, and yet they prospered, and did not meet with troubles, either in life or death, as other men did; but had even what heart could wish, though they were ungodly sinners, Ps. 73. from v. 3. to the 12th.

2: Glory not in this, that God lets you alone in your sinful ways, and suffers you to prosper; For it's a token that he intends to destroy you for ever, Ps. 97. 2, *when the wicked do spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish, it is that they shall be destroyed for ever.*

3. It may be the hand of the Lord is lifted up, and hath gone out against you several ways, since you took up this practise of Informing; though you take no notice of it, Isa. 26. 11, *Lord when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see, but they shall see and be ashamed for their envy at the people; yea, the fire of thine enemies shall devour them.*

4. Though you do not meet with judgments in your Bodies, Estate, or Families; yet it may be God hath smitten you with spiritual judgments. When Pharaoh oppressed Israel, and would not let Israel go to worship God; besides the Plagues that reach the outward man, God sent Plagues upon Pharaoh's heart, Exod. 9. 14, *I will at this time send all my Plagues upon thy heart.* And how did God send all his Plagues upon Pharaoh's heart? It was by giving him up to Judicial hardness, Exod. 10. 1, *And the Lord said unto Moses, Go unto Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart.* It's a grievous curse to be given up of God to obstinacy of heart, Lam. 3. 65. *Give them sorrow of heart: (or as it is in the Margin) obstinacy of heart, thy curse unto them.* So Vatablus; give them *obstinatum cor*, an obstinate heart. When God gives a man an obdurate heart, he gives him a dreadful curse; what sadder token of God's displeasure, than when God lets him alone in his sins, as he did Ephraim? Hos. 4. 17. *Ephraim is joined to Idols, let him alone.* Hos. 12. 14, *Ephraim provoked him to anger most bitterly.* Whence I infer, God is provoked to anger most bitterly with those sinners whom he lets alone, and suffers to go on in their sins without rebuke; For whom he loves, he rebukes and chastens, Rev. 3. 19.

5. Though God out of his patience bear with you, and give you time and space to repent; yet if you repent not, sudden and unavoidable destruction will come upon you, Prov. 29. 1, *He that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.* Job speaking of oppressors (and I conceive Informers to be guilty of oppression) tells us, how oft-times God takes them away in a very sudden and terrible manner, Job. 27. 20, 21, 22, *Terrors take hold of him as waters, a tempest stealeth him in the night, the east-wind carrieth him away, and he departeth, and as a storm burleth him out of his place. For God shall cast upon him and not spare; he would fain see out of his hand. All this time that God beareth with you, and waits for your repentance, he is whetting his sword and bending his bow, and preparing for you the instruments of death; and the longer the sword is whetting, the sharper it will be, and give the more deadly wound when it strikes you, Ps. 7. 10, 11, 12, God is angry with the wicked every day, if he turn not, he will whet his sword, he hath bent his bow and made it ready, he hath also prepared for him the instruments of death, he ordaineth his arrows against his persecutors.*

Pla 9. It brings us in great profit to go and inform against these men and their Meetings, and therefore being in straits, and having need of Money, we take up this trade of *reforming*; for thereby a third part of all fines will come into our Purfes.

Ans 1. If the work you went about were so good, yet it is sordid and sinful to go about such an employment from a covetous principle. Teaching the Word of God is a good work, and judging the causes between man and man is a good work; yet when a man's great end in these works is to get Money, they become sinful, *Mic. 3. 8. 11, I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and Israel his sin. The heads thereof judge for reward, and the Priests thereof teach for hire, and the Prophets thereof divine for Money.*

2. *Judas* gained thirty pieces of silver by betraying of Christ, but what good did his Money do him? when his Conscience was awakened and made sensible of his sin, his Money was a trouble to him, he was weary of it, and threw it away, and hanged himself, *Matt. 27. 5, He cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed and hanged himself.* When Balaam was sent for to Balack to curse *Israel*, and had a great reward proffered him, the love of the wages of unrighteousness prevailed with him to go; but what befel him in the way? An Angel met him with a drawn sword, and would have slain him, had not the Ass turned out of the way, *Numb. 22. 32, 33. And God to shew to Balaam his folly and madness, gave the Ass a voice to rebuke him. 2 Pet. 2. 15, 16, which have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the Son of Bazar, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but was rebuked for his iniquity. The dumb Ass speaking with mans voice, forbade the madness of the Prophet.* They that out of love to the wages of unrighteousness, will curse the *Israel* of God, are little better than mad-men. The very beasts, had they power to speak, would cry out of, and rebuke the iniquity of these men.

3. If this practise of yours be so sinful as hath been proved, then what you gain in this kind, is got with the loss of your Souls; and if you could gain the whole world, and should lose your souls, you would be miserable for ever, *Mark 8. 36, what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own Soul?*

4. Consider what the Scripture saith of unrighteous men, and the gain they make by their unrighteous practises. And I leave it to your Conscience to judge, whether to get riches by causing men to be punished for praying to God, and hearing his Word, be not to get them unrighteously.

1. All that is gained unrighteously, is got with the loss of the Kingdom of God, *1 Cor. 9. 6, Know you not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God?*

2. All that is gotten unrighteously, will last but a little while, *Jer. 17. 11, He that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and in the end shall be a fool.*

3. The riches you get this way, will eat your flesh as it were fire, the remembrance of these things in the other world will torment your Conscience, as much as fire does your flesh, *Jam. 5. 3, 4. Your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire, ye have heaped up treasure against the last days. Behold, the hire of the labourers which have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud cryeth,*

and

and the cry of them that reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. If the hire of a labouring man kept back by fraud cryeth, and the cry entereth into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth; how much more do the estates of those Ministers who have been Labourers in God's vineyard, which have been by you taken away by force and violence, cry unto the Lord, and their cry enter into the ears of the Lord of Hosts? And if the rust of the estates of covetous men, who heap up Money and do no good with it, will be a witness against them, and will eat their flesh like fire, then what a witness will all those goods be against you at the day of Judgment, which you have caused to be taken away from the servants of God? and how will the remembrance thereof vex and torment your Consciences; even as if your flesh were continually burning in the fire?

Plta 10. We abhor those men that turn *Informers* for filthy lucre sake, and look upon them as vile persons: It is zeal for the glory of God, and the good of the Church, that makes us prosecute these men; I purpose to give my part of the fines to the poor, and to charitable uses; therefore I hope I am praiseworthy.

Ans. 1: Suppose it be zeal that carries you out to prosecute these men, yet you may be guilty of persecution. When the Apostle *Paul* made havock of the Church of Christ, and haled the members of it to Prison, he did not act for gain or preferment, but out of zeal; yet he acknowledgeth himself a persecutor and injurious, though what he did proceeded out of a blind zeal, *Phil. 3. 6. Concerning zeal, persecuting the Church, Act. 26. 9. I verily thought with my self, I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth:*

And though he did nothing against the members of Christ, but what he thought to be his duty; yet when he was better instructed, he called himself the chief of sinners, for persecuting of Jesus Christ.

2. An indiscreet zeal may carry a man out, not only to do that which is prejudicial to himself, but may bring Judgments upon the Kingdom where he lives. *Saul* slaying the *Gibeonites* out of zeal to the children of *Israel* and *Judah*, brought a famine, which is a sore Judgment, that continued a long time in the Land even three years, *2 Sam. 21. 1, 2. Then there was a famine in the days of David three years, year after year. And David enquired of the Lord, and the Lord answered, it is for Saul and his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites. (Now the Gibeonites were not of the children of Israel, but of the remnant of the Amorites, and the children of Israel had sworn unto them. And Saul sought to slay them in his zeal to the children of Israel and Judah.)*

3. Those alms which you give to the poor out of these mens estates that are fined for meeting together to pray to God, and to hear his Word, are no way acceptable to God. For,

1. He loves judgment and righteousness, and hates those Sacrifices which are taken by Robbery from other men, and then presented to him for a Sacrifice, *Is. 61. 8, For I the Lord, love judgment, and hate Robbery for burnt-offering.*

2. He that would give alms which may be acceptable to God, must give alms of what he getteth righteously, *Matt. 6. 1, Take heed that ye do not your alms before men to be seen of them.* Some copies render it *τῷ δίκαιότητι*, as *Beyla* observes. Take heed you do not your righteousness before men: Alms

may be called righteousness; because they must be of goods honestly and righteously gotten. *Your alms.* We must give alms out of our own, not other mens estates.

4. Those that sought to build up Zion with blood, took the ready way to destroy Zion, Mic. 3. 10, 12, *They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity. Therefore shall Zion for your sake be ploughed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps.*

Plea 11. We hate these men, and know not how to find an occasion against them; except it be in the matters of their God, and this is a ready way to be avenged of them.

Ans. 1. If you hate these men, then you are Murderers in God's account, and shall have no part in his Kingdom, 1 *Job. 3. 15. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer, and ye know, that no murderer, hath eternal life abiding in him.*

2. Though men cannot see the spite that is in your hearts, but it may be covered over with fair pretences; yet God seeth it, and he will requite it, *Pf. 10. 14. Thou hast seen it; For thou beholdest mischief and spite to requite it with thy hand.*

3. Suppose any that come to these Meetings have done you wrong, yet you ought not to avenge your selves; but to overcome evil with good, *Rom. 12. 19, 21. Dearly beloved, avenge not your selves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine, and I will repay, saith the Lord. Be not overcome of evil; but overcome evil with good. Much less should you for the offence of one man seek to be revenged of an Assembly of men.* As Haman, when he had taken offence at Mordecai, sought to be avenged of the whole race of the Jews, which proved his overthrow.

Plea 12. We think, may others say, that some of these men are righteous persons, and mean well; but they disturb the peace of the Church, and their preaching causeth division in the Church; for by their means are Families divided, and some go one way and some another. And this makes us labour to suppress them; because the good of the Church is to be preferred above the good of particular persons.

Ans. 1. If you grant these men to be righteous men, you had need take heed how you persecute them. What *Job* said to his friends, *Job 19. 28. But ye should say, why persecute we him, seeing the root of the matter is in him? That you should say, why persecute we these men, seeing the root of the matter is in them, seeing they are of the same faith with us, and walk in the fear of God?*

2. If by the Church you understand the body of Christians, who embrace the Doctrine of the Gospel, and walk in all the Ordinances and Commandments of the Lord Jesus; then these men are a great part of the Church, and are not the disturbers of the Churches peace: For whom do they molest, whom do they persecute? They are desirous to live at peace among themselves, and to have peace with all men, as much as in them is. These Informers and their adherents are the disturbers of the Churches peace, who persecute men professing Faith in Christ, and walking in all the Ordinances of the Gospel; for worshipping God. If by the Church you mean the Pastors and Teachers of the Church; these men do not molest the conformable Clergy, in their executing their Ministerial office. As for such of them as are found in the Faith, holy in their Lives, faithful Preachers of God's holy Word; They say, the Blessing

Blessing of the Lord be upon them, and rejoyce to hear when they convert Souls to Christ. And in this sense also *Informers* are the disturbers of the Church, for their great design is to molest and persecute the Pastors and Teachers among the *Non-conformists*, rather than any other persons.

3. Great divisions arose in the Jewish Church upon the preaching of the Lord Jesus Christ; Families were divided upon his preaching, some were for him, others were against him. Fathers against their children, and children against their fathers, *Luk. 11. 51, 52, 53.* Suppose you that I am come to give peace on earth; I tell you nay, but rather division. For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. The Father shall be divided against the Son, and the Son against the Father. The Mother against the Daughter, and the Daughter against her Mother. The Mother-in-law against the Daughter-in-law, and the Daughter-in-Law against the Mother-in-law. Was Jesus Christ to be suppressed? was his preaching to be blamed, because of these divisions that followed upon it? Far be it from any man to say or think so. In like manner, if divisions and dissensions arise in Families, and among Relations upon the preaching of the Ministers of Christ; neither they are to be suppressed, nor their Ministers to be blamed.

Yea, it may be further added, that the preaching of the *Conformist* Ministers also doth cause dissensions and divisions in Families and Parishes; when many Families in one Parish will repair to hear the Ministers of another Parish, and that in great numbers; so that some Congregations where Ministers are eminent, are thronged; others, scarce any hearers at all; yea, in the same Families in London, and other places: several in the same Family do repair to several conforming Ministers of other Parishes. And some Persons of Quality zealous too for Uniformity, do constantly desert their own Ministers to hear some other they better approve of, taking all or the greatest part of their Families with them, and for years together; yet I suppose these *Informers* judge not themselves obliged out of their love of the Churches peace to prosecute these Ministers and their hearers, the one for preaching, and the other hearing.

Plea 13. We are convinced we have done evil, but you should not have reproved us so openly, whereby we are made odious in the eyes of the people. We were sufficiently hated before, but now we are like to be much more hated.

Ans. You have sinned openly, and therefore you are to be rebuked openly, that others might hear and fear, and not follow your evil example, *1 Tim. 5. 10.* Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.

2. Open rebuke is better than secret love, *Prov. 27. 5.* And you are not offended with a man for loving of you, though it be with a secret love. Why then should you be offended for being openly rebuked?

3. I have named no mans person. I have only laid open the odious nature of your sin. And your sin is more odious than can be expressed. I would not have any man hate your persons; but I would have all men hate your sins.

4. If you had died in your sins, you should have been put to everlasting shame, for that will be the portion of impenitent sinners, to be put to shame and contempt for ever, *Dan. 12. 2.* Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to everlasting shame and contempt. But if by this, or any other means, you are brought to repentance, then shall you have everlasting glory.

CHAP. IV.

Inferences from the foregoing Discourse.

I Shall now draw some Inferences from what hath been said concerning the greatness of the sin of these *Informers*, that persecute righteous men for praying to God, and preaching and hearing his holy Word, and cause their Assemblies to be broken up, and their goods to be taken from them.

Inf. 1. If this be such a great sin, then let those that have been guilty of it, repent and make restitution. Without repentance there's no possibility that you should avoid perishing for ever, *Luk. 13. 3, I tell you nay, but except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish.* Consider how sharply the Lord Jesus reproved the Pharisees, hindring mens entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven, *Matt. 23. 13. 33, Wo unto you Scribes, Pharisees, Hypocrites, for ye shut up the Kingdom of heaven against men; for ye neither go in your selves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers: How can ye escape the damnation of hell?* The Pharisees were said to shut up the Kingdom of Heaven; because they hindred the preaching of the Gospel, which is called, The Gospel of the Kingdom, *Matt. 24. 14.* And the Kingdom of Heaven, *Matt. 13. 47.* Because it is the way and means of bringing men into the Kingdom. That the Pharisees did shut up the Kingdom of Heaven, by hindring the preaching the Gospel, is evident from *Luk. 11. 52.* where the shutting up the Kingdom is called the taking away the key of knowledg. They acted the part of Serpents and Vipers; they did bite and sting those that preached, and those that heard the Gospel, *Job. 9. 22.* and so hindred mens entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven. And for this Serpentine carriage, Jesus tells them they were in danger of eternal damnation. *How can ye escape the damnation of hell?* will ye do the same things the Pharisees did, and yet think ye shall not fall into the same condemnation? your only way to avoid it is, by timely and sincere repentance. *Ezek. 18. 30, Repent and turn your selves from all your transgressions, and so iniquity shall not be your ruine.*

And as you must leave off your sins, so if you expect mercy from God; you must make restitution to those persons, from whom you have taken or caused to be taken away any of their goods. To convince you of the necessity of making restitution; consider such Scriptures as these, *Ezek. 33. 15, If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he hath robbed, walk in the statutes of life; he shall surely live, he shall not dye.* It's not sufficient that the wicked leave off robbing; but he must give again that which he hath robbed, to those from whom it was robbed; if he would enter into life and not dye in his sins. It may be you will say, We are not thieves and robbers, and so are not obliged by this Scripture to make restitution.

Ans. 1. The Hebrew word *Gazal*, signifieth any violent wresting, and forcing mens right out of their hands. And it is so rendred of things taken away violently, when a man seeth or knoweth it, as *Deut. 28. 31. Job 20. 19.*

2. Resti-

2. Restitution is to be made for all acts of deceit, as well as secret theft; *Lev. 6. 2, 4. If a soul sin, and commit a trespass against the Lord, in a thing taken by violence, and hath deceived his neighbour.---Then it shall be, because he hath sinned, and is guilty; that he shall restore what he hath violently taken away; or the thing he hath deceitfully gotten.*

3. In some respects you are worse than thieves and robbers; For,

1. Thieves are ashamed when they are discovered, *Jer. 2: 26, The thief is ashamed, when he is found.* But 'tis not so with you.

2: The thief usually takes the dead time of the night, but you commit your sin at mid-day. The more impudency there is in any sin, the greater it is.

3. The thief doth not rob men for their Religion; but you take away mens goods for serving God, see the necessity of restitution from other Scriptures. *Zophar* tells us that oppressors, and such as take away others goods, must make restitution, or else they shall never enjoy peace in their Consciences, *Job 20. 18, 19, 20. According to his substance shall the restitution be, and he shall not rejoice therein; because he hath oppressed and forsaken the poor, because he hath violently taken away an house which he hath not builded, surely he shall not feel quietness in his belly.* *Zacheus* when he was converted, made restitution to all persons he had wronged by false accusation; for all wrongs he had done them, *Luk. 19. 8, If I have taken any thing from any man, by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.* Hear what *Grotius* saith on this place: *Quatenus fieri potest, rescarcienda sunt damna aliis per vim aut dolum illata; quod ipsi natura dicat: neque enim peccare desistit, qui alienum retinet.* As far as a man is able, all the wrongs he hath done to other men, either by fraud or violence must be restored and made up, for the light of nature teacheth a man so to do, neither doth he desist from his sin, that doth not make restitution. It concerns you to consider whether you have not wronged these men by false accusation, when you accused them to the Magistrates for keeping seditious Meetings, and thereby getting their goods distrained; if you have, this example of *Zacheus* should provoke you to restore and make up all the wrongs they have sustained by your false accusation.

Inf. 2. Let all men take heed of being partakers with these *Informers* in their great sin. For such as partake with them in their sin, shall also be partakers of those Plagues, which God will send upon them for their sins; and they are very dreadful, which without repentance will be their portion; as hath been shewn in the second Chapter, *Rev. 8. 4. Come out of her my people, that you be not partakers of her sins, and that you receive not of her plagues.* As they that partake of *Babylon's* sins, shall be partakers of *Babylon's* Plagues; so shall they that partake of the *Informers* sins, partake of the *Informers* Plagues, *Prov. 29. 24. whose is partner with a thief hateth his own soul.* The same I may say of him that is partner with these *Informers*, he hateth his own Soul. And why doth he that is a partner with a thief hate his soul? Because he takes a sure and speedy course to destroy his own Soul. Let me here shew you, how many ways a man may be partaker with these *Informers* in their sin; for these men do involve many others in the guilt of their hainous transgression.

1. They that harbour these men in their houses, and wish them good success in their undertakings, are partners with them in their evil deeds, *1 Job. 2. Ep. v. 10, 11. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him, God speed; For he that biddeth him God speed*

is partaker of his evil deeds. As he that harboureth, and encourageth false teachers, is partaker with them in their evil-deeds; so also they that receive into their houses, encourage and wish success to these men that oppose the Ministers of Christ, that teach the Word of God in truth, are partakers with them in their evil deeds.

2. They become partakers with them in their sin, who rejoyce and take pleasure and delight to see these *Informers* disturb the Meetings of these men, *Obad. v. 12*, But thou shouldst not have looked upon the day of thy brother, in the day that he became a stranger; neither should thou have rejoyced over the children of Judah, in the day of their destruction, neither shouldst thou have spoken proudly in the day of their distress. They that take pleasure in others wickedness, are under the same, or rather a greater guilt than those persons that commit the wickedness, *Rom. 1. 32*, who knowing the Judgment of God, that they that do such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but take pleasure in them that do them. *Hoc pejus illo*, saith *Grotius* upon the place. This latter, To take pleasure in them that do them, is worse than the former; for a man may do evil under a temptation, but to take pleasure in another man's sin, argues an exceeding great corruption in that man's heart. God was greatly offended with *Moab*, for rejoycing at the *Assyrians* spoiling the *Israelites*, *Jer. 48. 26, 27*. *Moab* also shall swallow in his vomit, and be also shall be in derision. For was not *Israel* a derision unto thee? was he found among thieves? For since thou speakest of him, thou skippest for joy.

3. Such as at the infatigation of these *Informers* take away or buy those Goods which are taken away from men fearing God, for their worshipping God, and that either because they are sold at a low rate, or because they would not have the *Informers* go without a reward, *Obad. 13*. Thou shouldst not have entered into the gate of my people, in the day of their calamity; yea, thou shouldst not have looked on their affliction in the day of their calamity, nor have laid hands on their substance.

4. Such as plead their cause, defend and justify them in their evil ways, they are deeply guilty, and partakers with them in all the evil and mischief that they do. It is worse to plead for sin than to commit it. As *Grotius* observeth, *Nam affectu abreptus peccat aliquis, scilicet eo non peccaturus*. At qui defendunt talia & docent vitio carere, sane gravius delinquant. *Josh* thought that man worthy to dye that should plead for sin, *Judg. 6. 31*, Will ye plead for Baal, will you save him? He that will plead for him, let him be put to death while it is yet morning: To justify a wicked man, is an abominable sin in the sight of God, *Prov. 17. 15*, He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord.

5. They that afford their aid, help and assistance to these men, in their evil designs, are partakers of their sin. To help an ungodly man in an evil undertaking, will bring down wrath from the Lord, *2 Chron. 19. 2*, Shouldst thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord; Therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord. When the Apostle Paul made confession of his sin of persecution, he mentions the keeping the clothes of them that stoned *Stephen*, as an evidence of his consent to that wicked fact, and his being involved in the guilt of his blood, *Act. 22. 20*, And when the blood of thy Martyr *Stephen* was shed, I was standing by, and consenting to his death, and kept the raiment of them

them that slew him. Paul did not help to throw the stones, he did but keep the rayment of those persons, that stoned him, and this little assistance that he gave them was a great trouble to his Conscience. Take heed therefore of giving any assistance to these men, either by guiding them to the places, where these persons are assembled, that they seek after; It is recorded to Judas eternal infamy, *That he was guide to them that took Jesus, Act. 1. 16.* or by telling them the names of the persons, whom they find assembled together, or drawing up their Informations they give unto the Magistrate, or aiding them in the dispersing these Assemblies, or any other way helping them in their evil way.

6. Such as excite, counsel, and put forward these Informers to undertake their evil work, are partakers with them in their sin. The people of Israel were said to make the calf which Aaron made; because he made it by their instigation, *Exod. 32. 2. 35.* The people gathered themselves together unto Aaron; and said unto him, *up, make us Gods, which shall go before us.* And the Lord plagued the people, because they made the calf which Aaron made. The guilt was equally, and the plague greater upon the people for stirring up Aaron to make the calf, than upon Aaron himself, that made the golden calf. David is charged with killing Uriah, *2 Sam. 12. 9.* *Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword;* yet David himself did not touch him, they were the Ammonites that killed him; but because David plotted and contrived his death, and wrote Letters to Joab, to set him in the forefront of the battel where he was slain, *Ch. 11. 14. 15.* Uriah's blood was laid to David's charge. Jezebel stirring up Ahab to work wickedness, made her a partaker of Ahab's guilt, *1 Kings 21. 25.* *There was none like unto Ahab that did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord whom Jezebel his wife stirred up.*

7. Such as hire those Informers to undertake this work, or give them a reward for what they do, are partakers of their evil deeds. As the adversaries of the Jews hired men to hinder the building of the temple, *Ezr. 4. 5.* *They hired counsellors against them to frustrate their purpose all the days of Cyrus.* So some men that are adversaries to these Meetings, and are ashamed to appear in this odious work themselves, do hire men fit for their turn to carry on this evil design. Let such persons remember what a mark of displeasure the Lord left upon the Moabites, for hiring Balaam to curse Israel. Not only the men of that generation, but their posterity was excluded for ever from coming into the Congregation of the Lord for this sin, *Neb. 13. 1, 2.* *On that day they read in the book of Moses in the audience of the people; and therein was found written, that the Ammonite and Moabite should not come into the congregation of God for ever. Because they met not the children of Israel with bread and with water, but hired Balaam against them, that he should curse them. Howbeit God turned the curse into a blessing.* All that cleanse their hearts from sin, and walk according to the rule of the Word, are as dear to God, as the children of Israel were of old; yea, they are God's Israel, *Pf. 73. 1.* *Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.* *Gal. 6. 16.* *As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.* And if God were so angry with the Moabites for hiring Balaam to curse Israel, that he would not suffer them to come into the Congregation of the Lord for ever; Then how much more will God's anger be kindled against those that profess themselves Christians, and yet hire vain persons to persecute such as are Israelites for worshipping and serving the Lord?

Inf. 3. Are these Informers guilty of such a great sin, then let me advise such as are, or hereafter may be tempted to turn Informers, in the words of Solomon,

Prov. 1. 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15. My Son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. If they say, come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause. We shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil. Call in thy lot among us, let us all have one purse. My Son, walk not thou in the way with them, refrain thy foot from their path. Let no proffer of any reward tempt you to persecute innocent men for serving God; for such as lye in wait against the innocent, lye in wait to destroy their own soul, Prov. 1. 11, 18, *Let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause. They lay wait for their own blood, they lurk privily for their own souls.* It is mentioned by the Psalmist among the Characters of those that shall inherit the Kingdom of Heaven; that he must be one that will not be hired by any reward to do any hurt to an innocent man, Ps. 15. 1, 5, Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle, and who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that back-biteseth not with his tongue, nor doth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh reward against the innocent. Remember our Lord Jesus, when the Devil offered him all the Kingdoms of the world, and all the glory of them to have committed one act of sin; he rejected his proffer with disdain, Matt. 4. 6, 7, 8. As the gaining the whole world could not tempt Christ to consent to one act of false worship: So no gain should tempt you to disturb the true worshippers of God, that worship him in Spirit and Truth: So as to hinder one act of true worship.

Inf. 4. Let the Friends, Relations, and Acquaintance of these Informers as they love their Souls, pity them, and pray to God for them, and reprove them for their sins; and plead with them to turn from their evil ways. If you let them go on in their sins without reproving them, you have no love for their souls, but you hate them in your hearts, Lev. 19. 17, *Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart; thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him.* And if they do not, or will not hearken unto you, plead with God for them; that he would give them repentance, and pull them as fire-brands out of the fire, before they fall into everlasting burnings. And watch your seasons to deal with them, when God shall lay affliction upon them, that is a good season to be dealing with them; for they that are as the deaf adder in the day of prosperity, and will not hearken unto any good counsel; have their ears open to instruction in a day of trouble, Job 36. 8, 9, 10.

Inf. 5. If these Informers and their adherents be guilty of such great evils, then it concerns those that are placed in the condition of watch-men upon Mount Zion, to warn them of their sin, and to warn others also, that they be not partakers with them in their sins: For if they dye in their sins, and they have given them no warning, their blood will be required at their hands, Ezek. 3. 17, 18, *Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel, therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me, when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely dye, and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way to save his life; the same wicked man shall dye in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thy hand.*

Inf. 6. Caution to those that are sufferers by these Informers: Let neither the greatness of their sins, nor the greatness of your sufferings, who are persecuted by them, provoke you to return evil to them, for the evil they have done unto you, Rom. 12. 17, *Recompence to no man evil for evil.* Vengeance belongs unto God, and not unto us; and therefore we must not go about to avenge our selves on those that injure us, v. 19, *Dearely beloved, avenge not your selves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.*

Our Lord Jesus hath taught us, that we must love, pray for, and do good to the worst enemies we have in all the world; even such as hate us, curse us, use us despitefully, and persecute us, *Matth. 5. 44.* But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you. These men are the rod of God, and therefore look beyond the instruments to the hand of the Lord, who correcteth you, that he may make you partakers of his holiness, and humble your selves under his mighty hand, and turn to him that smiteth you; and then the Lord will turn all your sufferings to your advantage. And as you must not offer any violence to these men; so neither should you fret, nor be cast down at their prosperity, *Pf. 37. 1, 2, 7.* Fret not thy self, because of evil-doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity; for they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently; fret not thy self because of him that prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass. Their feet stand in slippery places, and they shall slide in due time.

Inf. 7. Let all persons both officers and others, to whom these *Informers* resort to desire or require their assistance, who are convinced of their evil ways; be cautious of affording them any help in carrying on their evil designs, lest they become partakers with them in their sin. They that are helpers in an evil work are involved in guilt, and will receive punishment from the hands of the Lord, as well as the chief agents. But some may say, These *Informers* threaten to bring us into trouble, if we will not go along with them, and help to break and disperse the Assemblies of these men: it is not love to them or the work they do, that makes us go along with them; for it is against our Conscience to molest these men, either in or for their worshipping of God; but we do it that we may not come into trouble.

Ans. 1. Trouble of Conscience is greater than any worldly trouble whatever, and harder to be born, *Prov. 18. 14.* The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit, who can bear? If you will act against your Consciences for fear of being brought into trouble, it is the way to wound your spirits; and a wounded spirit may prove an intolerable burthen to you.

2. See how far you are from *Moses* his spirit, he chose affliction rather than the pleasures of sin, *Heb. 11. 25.* Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasure of sin for a season. But you choose the drudgery of sin, rather than to run the hazard of a light affliction.

3. As those *Informers* threaten to bring you into trouble, if you joyn not with them in their evil designs; so God does threaten you and wrath to them that spoil those that did not spoil them, and deal treacherously with those that dealt not treacherously with them, *Is. 23. 1.* Wo to her, that spoilest, and thou wast not spoiled, and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee. What hurt did these men do to you, that you should assist them that would spoil their goods; and their opportunities of serving God? whose threatnings are to be dreaded most, the threatnings of God or of Men?

4. You have more cause to fear offending God, than to fear the trouble these men can bring upon you, by not joining with them in their evil ways. For,

1. Which is easier to be born the wrath of these men, or the wrath of God? The wrath of God is more dreadful, than the wrath of all the men in the world.

2. God is to be feared more than all the men in the world; for there is no man can do such things as God can do unto us. The worst that man can do, is

to kill the body; but God can cast both body and soul into hell-fire; Luk. 12. 4, 5. *I say unto you, my friends, be not afraid of them that can kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you, whom you shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell, yea, I say unto you, Fear him.*

5. Put your trust in God, and labour to do that which is right and pleasing in the sight of God, and then you need not fear what these, or any other men can do unto you, Ps. 56. 11, *Is God have I put my trust, I will not be afraid what man can do unto me.*

Obj. But these men bring Warrants with them from the Magistrates, which require us to go along with them, else we would not attend such vile persons as many of these are; but when we have a Warrant from the Magistrates to go with them, we must be obedient to authority.

Ans. 1. It is your duty to obey your Superiours in all their lawful commands; If your Warrants contain nothing in them, but what is warranted by the Word of God, you ought to do what is enjoyned you therein. But if they contain any thing contrary to the mind and Will of God, in that case you are to obey God rather than man.

2. When the *Informers* procure Warrants from the Magistrates to give your assistance to them, under pretence that there is a seditious Meeting; believe not their reports: For many of them are false accusers; but see with your own eyes, and hear with your own ears, what is said and done in their Assemblies, which they call seditious, before you create any disturbance to them. And it may be you will be convinced, that God is in the midst of them of a truth; and that the reports which the *Informers* raise up of these men and their Meetings, are false and slanderous reports. When the Pharisees sent Officers to apprehend Christ upon the strange rumours that were spread abroad concerning him, in stead of disturbing and bringing him to the Rulers, they went away and extolled his preaching, *Joh. 7. 32, 45, 46. The Pharisees heard that the people murmured such things concerning him, and the Pharisees and chief Priests sent officers to take him.—Then came the officers to the chief Priests and Pharisees, and they said unto them, why have ye not brought him? The officers answered, never man spake like unto this man.* When you are sent to disturb these men, did you attend with humble hearts, while they are praying to God, and preaching his holy Word? I doubt not but you would be convinced in your Consciences, that there is nothing said or done at these Meetings that deserveeth punishment, and that you ought not to offer any violence to them.

3. If you find any person under a pretence of Religious exercises contriving insurrections, or if you hear them stirring up the people to sedition, you may make use of your power to suppress sedition and insurrections. I plead nothing for such kind of men; but abhor and declare against their practices, who use Religious exercises as a pretence to carry on sedition and insurrections.

4. When you go to the Assemblies of these men; if you find them assembled together in a peaceable manner; if you see and hear nothing but praying to God in the name of Christ, for things agreeable to the Will of God; and preaching the Gospel, whereby men may be saved; if you hear nothing contrary to sound Doctrine; if you see nothing inconsistent with godliness; instead of molesting these men, or causing them to be punished, you should do well to carry the *Informers* before the Magistrates, and acquaint them, that in obedience to their commands you have been searching for seditious Meetings; but could find none; that those men, whom these *Informers* pretend were met in a seditious manner;

you.

you found met in a peaceable manner, and that they were doing nothing else, but praying to God in the name of Christ, and preaching and hearing God's holy Word; and that you think you should sin against God if you should disturb or punish men for worshipping and serving God, under a pretence of suppressing of seditious Conventicles; and that in your judgment the *Informers* ought to be punished as false accusers; rather than these men for serving God. Under the Law, when one man was a witness against another, and testified that which was wrong, diligent inquisition was to be made, and if the witness had testified that which was false, the Magistrates were to punish the false witness, and not the party against whom he had testified false things, and his punishment was to be according to what he had intended to have done against his brother, against whom he was a false witness, *Deut. 19. 16, 18, 19, If a false witness rise up against any man to testify against him that which was wrong; The judge shall make diligent inquisition: And behold if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother, Then shalt thou do unto him, as he thought to do unto his brother; so shalt thou put evil away from among you.* Respect to the command of God should keep Magistrates from being too sudden in crediting and acting upon the testimony of these *Informers* till according to God's appointment, they have made diligent inquisition, whether there be truth in what they have testified; and if they find them false witnesses they should execute the Law of *Moses* against them; and that for these reasons:

1. The equity and righteousness of the Law.
2. This would be a means of putting away evil from among them, which may be understood two ways.

1. It would put away the evil of sin, because punishing the false witness would deter others from becoming false witnesses.

2. It would put away the evil of punishment; for if they connive at false witnesses which oppress innocent persons, this will bring down God's judgments upon themselves as well as these false witnesses.

Inf. 8. Whereas these *Informers*, and their adherents, do not only privately accuse these Ministers and their hearers to the Magistrates, but sometimes take upon them to get Officers and Souldiers, and come to their Assemblies in a rude and hostile manner, and disturb them while they are in the worship and service of God, and do put on that impudence as to call to the Minister, that is praying or preaching to come down, I would advise them to consider two or three things:

1. What an irreligious action this is, how inconsistent with the fear of God, and with the reverence which is due to men made after the image of God, to disturb the servants of God for doing those things which are commanded of God, in the very time and season that they are worshipping and serving the Lord. God is to be feared at all times and places, but more especially the awe and dread of God is to be upon us, when his servants are assembled to worship him, and we are present at their Assemblies, *Pf. 89. 7. God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the Saints, and to be had in reverence of all that are round about him.* Do you fear God greatly, when you come into the Assemblies of his Saints, and call to them in the time of their devotion to leave off the service of God?

2. What beset *urrah* for putting forth his hand, and taking hold of the Ark, when the oxen that carried it stumbled, and the Ark shook. God was angry with him, and smote him with sudden death, *2 Sam. 6. 6, 7. & urrah put forth his hand to the Ark of God, and took hold of it, for the oxen shook it. And the anger of the Lord*

was kindled against *uzzab*. And God smote him there for his error, and he died. *uzzab's* taking hold of the Ark, was no malicious act, no plotted, deliberate, wilful sin; but an error, a rash action; yet for this error and rashness, he dyed upon the place where his sin was committed; though it is likely, he had a good end in what he did. If rashness and error in taking hold of the Ark, a type of God's presence among the Jews, was punished with such severity in *uzzab*; what severity may these men expect from God, for premeditated and deliberate acts of violence against his servants who are temples of God; and have God really and truly dwelling in them by his holy Spirit, when they hale them out of their Assemblies, and force them to desist from the service of God.

3. Remember what befel *Jeroboam* for stretching out his hand to take the Prophet for delivering the Lords message, his hand was suddenly dried up, that he could not pull it in again, 1 King. 13, 14, *And it came to pass when King Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God, which had cried against the Altar in Bethel, that he put forth his hand from the Altar, and said, Lay hold on him. And his hand which he put forth against him dried up, so that he could not pull it in again to him. Jeroboam was a King, yet for attempting to take hold of a Prophet for doing the work God set him about, this remarkable and sudden Judgment of God came upon him. If God dealt thus with such a tall Cedar, what may the shrubs expect? These men that take upon them to lay hold of the Ministers and Servants of Christ, while they are about the Lords work, and call them to cease, may fear lest their tongues should cleave to the roof of their mouths, or their arms wither, or some other great Judgment should fall upon them in the act of their sin.*

4. Let that Judgment also which fell upon the Captains and Soldiers that went to *Elijah*, and called to him to come down, be minded by those that fetch Officers and Soldiers to the Assemblies of these men, and take upon them to call them to come down out of their Pulpits, when they are praying to God or instructing the people. It concerns these *Informers* and those Officers and Soldiers that come along with them, to be awakened by this Judgment, to take heed what they do against these men, 2 King. 1. 9, 10, *Then the King sent to him a Captain of fifty with his fifty, and he went up to him, and behold he sate on the top of an hill. And he spake unto him, Thou man of God, the King hath said, come down. And Elijah answered and said unto the Captain of fifty, If I be a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty: And there came down fire from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty. The same Judgment of fire from Heaven for the same sin, came upon another Captain of fifty and his fifty, v. 11, 12. The sin of these *Informers*, and the Officers and Soldiers that come with them to disturb the servants of God, and call to the Ministers to come down, is in my apprehension far greater than the sin of those Captains and their Companies, that called to *Elijah* to come down; and that in several respects.*

1. Those Captains were sent by the King's own order, and did but deliver the King's message, *The King hath said, Come down*; yet this did not exempt them from being consumed, that they had order for what they did, that they were sent by lawful Authority; but these *Informers* come of their own head, prompted on usually, either by covetousness or malice.

2. Those Captains did not disturb *Elijah* when he was at his devotion, they did not interrupt him when he was praying to God, or preaching to the people. But these *Informers* come in the time that these men are worshipping of God, and disturb and call to them to come down while they are serving God, which aggravates their sin.

3. Those

3. Those Captains did not themselves, or any of their company touch *Elijah's* person, or his estate; but these *Informers* procure Officers to hale these men out of their Meetings, to break open their houses, and to carry away their goods.

4. It's hard to say what was the sin of those Captains that were consumed with fire from Heaven for calling to *Elijah* to come down: Whether they spake to the Prophet in a rude insulting manner, or not with that respect that became a Prophet (for the other Captain that went to him in an humble manner was spared) or because they knew there was evil determined against *Elijah* by the King, and yet they would be instrumental to fetch him; or whether they spoke to him, in a scoffing manner; though all the people held him for a Prophet, yet it may be they did not, and so might call him the man of God in way of derision. But in the actings of these *Informers* there is a complication of many abominable sins; which are visible and hateful to God and all good men; Yea, the common sort of people see and detest the odious practices of these men.

Obj. 1. But *Elijah* was a Prophet, should we call to a Prophet when he was praying and preaching to come down; or should we get Officers and Soldiers to pull them out of their Pulpits and disperse their Assemblies, we might be afraid least fire should come down from Heaven, and consume us, and all that come along with us; but we do not fear any such thing in reference to these men.

Ans. 1. The Ministers of Christ that live in these days of the Gospel, are to be respected as much as the Prophets that lived under the Law. And the affronts and injuries offered unto them are as offensive to God, as the injuries that were done unto the Prophets by the Jews. If you be not satisfied in the truth of this assertion, weigh what our Lord Jesus saith, *Matt. 11. 9, 11. What went you out for to see, a Prophet, yet, I say unto you, and more than a Prophet. Verily, I say unto you, Among them that are born of women, there hath not been a greater than John the Baptist, notwithstanding he that is left in the Kingdom of God is greater than he.* There was a clearer discovery of Christ in the days of *John the Baptist* than in the time of the Prophets, and therefore he is preferred above the Prophets, equalized to all that were born of women by our Lord Jesus. But after the death of Christ there was a fuller and clearer manifestation of Christ, than when *John the Baptist* lived; and therefore our Lord Jesus in this respect, namely, of the excellency and clearness of the Doctrine of the Gospel, extolled the least Ministers under the New Testament above *John the Baptist*, not that they excel or are equal to him in holiness, but have a more clear knowledge of the Messiah than he had.

2. The Ministers and Servants of Christ in these days have like precious faith with the Apostles, *2 Pet. 1. 1. Simon Peter a servant, and an Apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us, through the righteousness of God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.* And there are no gifts or privileges that commend a man to God like faith, *Gal. 5. 6, For in Jesus Christ, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love.* God loves all that believe in his Son, as he did *Elijah*, and he will avenge the wrongs done unto them as he did what was done unto *Elijah*. For their faith is a-like precious in the sight of God, with the faith of *Elijah*.

Obj. 2.

Obj. 2. There is no fire that cometh down from Heaven to consume us, as there did upon the Captains that went to apprehend *Elijah*; but we enrich our selves this way, and therefore our sin is not so bad as theirs was.

Ans. 1. Though fire do not come down from heaven, and consume you, yet there is fire in hell prepared, and reserved for you, *Psi. 9. 17, The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the Nations that forget God. And the fire which is in hell is more dreadful, than that which came down from Heaven. For,*

1. That fire consumed the Captains, and the Soldiers that were with them; but the fire of hell though it torments you it will never consume you.

2. That fire lasted but a little while, but the fire of hell will last for ever, *Matt. 25. 41, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels.*

3. Your being let alone in your sins will prove a greater Judgment, if you persist in your sins without repentance, than if fire should come down from Heaven and consume you; for by going on in your sins without repentance, you treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, and fill up the measure of your iniquities; and so will have a greater degree of torment in the other world for ever.

4. This example of God's consuming those Captains with their Soldiers that came to apprehend *Elijah* by fire from Heaven, is recorded to deter all persons from offering violence to any of the Lords Prophets or Messengers, to the end of the world, *1 Cor. 10. 11, Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples, and they are written for our admonition; on whom the ends of the world are come.*

5. These men know not how soon they may be consumed by fire from Heaven; for God's Word speaks of raining down fire upon ungodly men, *Psi. 11. 6, upon the wicked he shall rain fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: This shall be the portion of their cup, Job. 20. 26, A fire not blown shall consume him. When it thunders and lightens, they may fear every flash of lightning should burn them to ashes: But if this should not befall them; yet the day is hastening when all ungodly men shall be consumed with fire in a more dreadful manner than these Captains and their Soldiers. And then the troublers of the people of God shall have such a day of trouble as never was since the world stood, *2 Thess. 1. 6, 7, 8, 9, It is a righteous thing with God to recompence tribulation to them that trouble you, and to you that are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus Christ shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty Angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of God, and from the glory of his power.**

C H A P. V.

Humble Advice to Magistrates not to countenance these Informers, nor to suppress the Non-conformist Ministers or their Meetings.

Seeing these Informers are wont to address themselves to the Magistrates, and bring false accusations to them against these Ministers called Non-conformists; informing them that they keep Seditious Conventicles, and do thereby excite and stir them up to imprison or fine those Ministers, and suppress their Assemblies. I shall crave leave before I conclude this discourse, humbly to advise and request those Magistrates to whom these Informers address themselves for assistance in their undertakings. First, That they would not give any countenance to this generation of men, that take upon them the employ of being Informers. Secondly, That they do not at their instigation punish the Ministers and Servants of Christ, when no other Crime can be proved against them; but that they have been praying to God in the Name of his Son, or that they have been Preaching or hearing his Holy Word.

1. My humble request to you is, that you would give no countenance or encouragement to this sort of Men. And that for Gods sake, in whose stead you are placed in the world; for your own sake, and for the Kingdom sake, that guilt and wrath come not upon your selves, and upon the Kingdom; for the sake of these Informers that they be not multiplied and increased. Give me leave to touch briefly on these Heads. 1. You are Gods Vicegerents, you stand in his Room, and Rule in his stead. When God made Moses Ruler over Aron, and the people of Israel: he tells him, *Thou shalt be to him instead of God. Exod. 4. 16.* You rule and judge not for your selves, but for the Lord who stands by and observes what you say, and what you do, and therefore you had need take heed what judgment you pass upon every man that comes before you. 2 *Chron. 19. 6. Take heed what you do, for ye judge not for men, but for the Lord, who is with you in the judgment.* And seeing you stand in Gods stead, and rule and judge for him; Look how the Lord God would carry himself, if he were in your Places; so ye ought to carry your selves, whom he would encourage, those you ought to encourage; whom he would rebuke and reprove; those ye ought to rebuke and reprove. Now consider with your selves, if the Lord Jesus Christ were on Earth and were in your place, and these Informers came unto him to complain against his Servants for praying and Preaching and hearing his Word; what are your thoughts? and what do your Consciences tell you he would do in this case? would he countenance or reprove and Punish them? surely he would give no Countenance to such vile persons in such a sinful undertaking. 2. By assisting these men, you will bring down Gods Wrath upon your selves.

and the Nation. Upon your selves: To evidence this, weigh what was said by the Prophet to *Jehoshaphat*. 2 Chr. 19. 2. *Shouldst thou help the ungodly? and love them that hate the Lord? Therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord.* This wrath came upon *Jehoshaphat* for helping *Ahab* in fighting against the Syrians. Here let it be considered, 1. That *Jehoshaphat* was a great man; he was King of *Judah*; he was also a good man. v. 3. *Nevertheless there are good things in thee, in that thou hast taken away the groves out of the Land, and hast prepared thy Heart to seek God.* Yet neither his greatness nor his goodness kept of the wrath of God from him for helping an ungodly man. 2. *Ahab* whom *Jehoshaphat* helped was a King, King of *Israel*. And it might seem good policy for one neighbouring Prince to help another: Because, by helping *Ahab* he might have had his help another time against the adversaries of *Juda*, yet neither did this excuse him. 3. The Persons against whom *Jehoshaphat* helped *Ahab* were the Syrians. And the Syrians were Idolaters that worshipped strange Gods. 2 Chr. 28. 23. They were also great enemies, to the Kingdoms of *Israel* and *Judah*. Jer. 9. 12. *The Syrians before and the Philistines behind, and they shall devour Israel with open Mouth.* They were a People devoted to destruction. 1 Kings. 20. 42. Now if *Jehoshaphat* incurred the displeasure of God for helping *Ahab*, because he was an ungodly man; to suppress the Syrians who were Idolaters and enemies of *Israel* and *Judah*. How can you think but that you shall bring down the Wrath of God upon your selves, if you help these Informers, who go about to oppress and suppress the Servants of the true and Living God; while they are worshiping & serving the Lord. If it be said, It doth not appear to you, that these Informers are ungodly men, and such as hate the Lord; you do not judge them like *Ahab*, that had sold himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord. If you did, then you might fear God would be angry with you for being helpful to them. To that I answer, 1. If you please to peruse those demonstrations which I have given out of the Scriptures of the Evil of their ways, in the second of *Chron.* you may be convinced that their practices are not consistent with godlyness. In some respects those men are worse than *Ahab*, for when *Ahab* was reproved by *Elijah* for taking a possession of *Naboths* Vineyard, which he had gotten by unjust means; he humbled himself before God, and Fasted, and rent his Cloaths, and lay in Sackcloth. 1 Kings 21. 27. 29. But we hear of no Humiliation from these men, after they have been reproved for taking into their possession other mens Goods, which they obtain by undue means. And as you will bring the Wrath of God upon your selves so also upon the Nation, if you countenance and encourage this sort of Men. When the Rulers do not punish evil doers, they bring guilt and Wrath not only upon themselves but upon the Nation where they live; how much more if they give encouragement to them. Nehe. 13. 17. 18. *Then I contended with the Nobles of Judah, and said unto them, what evil thing is this that ye do, and prophane the Sabbath day. Did not your Fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this Citie? yet ye bring, more Wrath upon Israel, by prophaning the Sabbath.* They were the meaner sort of the People that prophaned the Sabbath, such as bare burthens, trode the Winepress, sold Fish and other wares, v. 15. 16. And because the Nobles did not restrain them, what these

men did is laid to [the Charge of the Nobles. And Nehemiah tells them they brought Wrath upon Israel by prophaning the Sabbath.

3. If you carry it toward those men as though they were righteous, acquitting them when complaints and appeals are made to you, or rewarding them as though they had done well, when their iniquity and folly is manifest, and hateful almost to all men, you will lose your respect among the People, *Prov. 24. 24, 25. He that saith to the Wicked thou art Righteous, him shall the People Curse, Nations shall abhor him. But to them that rebuke him shall be delight and a good Blessing.*

4. They are usually the basest of men that take upon them this employment, men of a very ill fame in the Place where they live, if their conversations were Looked into, there are such Blots upon some of them, as would make them abhorred of all sober men. And if such men be exalted, countenanced, and rewarded, it will cause Wickedness, and Wicked Persons to abound in the Nation. *Prov. 12. 18. The Wicked walk on every side, when the vilest persons are exalted.* If you harken to the Lying informations, these men bring against innocent Persons, it will not only incourage them, but others also to Tread in their Steps. *Prov. 29. 11. If a ruler hearken unto lyes, all his Servants are Wicked.* But if you would shew your selves angry with them for Backbiting and Slandring those that are peaceable, you would soon free your selves from the Trouble of these men, and the Nation also. *Prov. 15. 23. The North Wind driveth away Rain, so doth an angry Countenance a backbiting tongue.*

2. My humble request to you is that you would not punish any of the Ministers or other Servants of Christ; when no other Crime is or can be proved against them; but their meeting together to pray to God in the name of Christ; or to preach and hear his holy Word. The advice which Gamaliel gave the rulers of the Jews, when the Apostles were brought before the Council for Preaching, after they had received strict Charge to forbear teaching the People was wise and seasonable advice. I humbly offer the same to you. *Act. 5. 38, 39. Refrain from these men and let them alone, for if this Council or this Work be of men, it will come to nought; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it, lest happily ye be found even to fight against God.* That this advice may be more effectual; I humbly intreat you to consider.

1. What a strict charge the Lord Jesus hath given his Ministers to preach his word. He chargeth them three times as they love him, to feed his Sheep and his Lambs, *John 21. 15, 16, 17. Jesus said to Simon Peter. Simon Son of Jonas Lovest thou me more than those? Feed my Lambs. Lovest thou me? Feed my Sheep. Lovest thou me? Feed my Sheep.* He chargeth them as they will answer the neglect thereof at the day of Judgment to preach the word in season, and out of season, *2 Tim. 4. 1, 2. I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and dead at his appearing. Preach the word, be instant in season and out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all patience and long suffering.* He hath laid it upon them as a necessary duty to Preach the Gospel, and pronounces a Wo against them that neglect it. *1 Cor. 9. 16. Necessary is laid upon me: Yea Wo unto me, if I Preach not the Gospel. Will ye forbid, will punish these men for doing that for which they have such a strict command from Jesus Christ.*

2. Consider what a high respect and dear love the Lord Jesus beareth to all those, that hear his word and do it. He loveth and honoureth them, as he loved and honoured his Mother and his Brethren, *Luk. 8. 20, 21.* And it was told him by certain that said, *Thy Mother and thy Brethren stand without desiring to see thee.* And he answered and said, *my Mother and my Brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it.* If the Virgin Mary, the Mother of Christ were now upon the earth, you would offer no injury to her, you would not disturb her at her devotion, you would not punish her for hearing the word of God, but shew all respect to her. You should be as unwilling to offer any violence, or suffer any wrong to be done to those that hear and do the word of God; as you would to the Mother and Brethren of Christ; For he loveth and respecteth them that hear and do Gods word as he did his Mother and his Brethren.

3. Remember what a charge the Lord hath given you not to touch his anoynted and do his prophets no harm, *Jf. 10. 5. 15. Touch not mine anointed, and do my Prophets no harm.* This charge is given in an especial manner to Rulers and Governors, as appears from the foregoing words. *He reprov'd Kings for their sakes, saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.* By his anointed, whom he would not have you touch, *Fiscator* and several other interpreters understand, *Unctus donis Spiritus Sancti.* Such as are anointed with the gifts and graces of the Spirit. The pouring out of the Spirit is called an Unction; and the anoynting, *1 John 2. 20, 27.* Prophets were of two sorts; first, such as had an extraordinary call, and could foretell things to come. Secondly as were qualified, and called to teach and instruct the people; though they had no extraordinary gifts, *1 Cor. 14. 3. He that Prophesieth speaketh unto men, to edification, and exhortation and comfort.* And so the word prophet is used. *Matth. 10. 41.* for a Minister of the Gospel. Now though this charge of not touching his anoynted, and doing his prophets no harm, was primarily given to those rulers, where *Abraham* and his posterity sojourn'd: yet it equally concerneth all rulers in all ages; not to touch those he hath anointed with his holy Spirit, and to do no harm to any of his Ministers.

4. Let it be considered that Praying and Preaching are means appointed by God for the saving mens souls. Prayer is a means of obtaining salvation, *Rom. 10. 13. Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved.* *Amos. 5. 4. Thus saith the Lord unto the house of Israel; Seek ye me, and ye shall live.* And the Preaching the Gospel is a special means for obtaining salvation, *Rom. 1. 16. I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.* Yea even that Preaching which the world derides and counts Foolishness, God blesteth it to the saving of Souls, *1 Cor. 1. 21. After that in the Wisdom of God, the World by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of Preaching, to save them that believe.* And the saving of Souls from hell torments is a work of the greatest moment in the whole world. The Eternal Son of God became man, and humbled himself to death to the painful accursed death of the Cross, to save lost Souls. *1 Tim. 1. 15. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.* And great care should be used that we do not hinder the obtaining that for which Christ shed his precious blood.

The

The greatest good we can do for any man is to further, and the greatest hurt is to hinder his Salvation.

5. It is recorded to the honour of *Hezekiah*, that he was an encourager of all that did faithfully dispenſe the word of God. *2 Chr. 30. 22. Hezekiah ſpeak comfortably to all the Levites, that taught the good knowledge of the Lord.* And as he did encourage the Miniſters of Gods word, ſo God did wonderfully bleſs him, *2 Chr. 31. 30. Hezekiah prospered in all his works.* And it is recorded of *Herod* as one of his chief ſins, that he imprifoned one of Gods Miniſters. *Luk 3. 19, 20. But Herod the Tetrarch, being reproved by him for Herodias his brother Philips wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, Added this above all, that he ſhut up John in priſon.* Herod was guilty of many evils, but this is noted as the principal, as that which was above all the reſt, that he ſhut up John in priſon. And as it is a great ſin to afflict the Miniſters and ſervants of Chriſt, ſo it is uſally followed with a ſore judgment. *Herod* who ſtretched forth his hand to vex certain of the Church, ſoon after dyed in a miſerable manner being eaten up of Worms. *Aſ. 12. 1, 2, 3, 23. Pharaoh*, who oppreſſed *Iſrael* and would not let them go to ſerve the Lord in the wilderneſs, was followed with one plague after another till he was deſtroyed.

6. Rulers ought not to be a terrour to ſuch as do good works, but to encourage and proteſt them, *Rulers are not a terrour to good works, but to the evil.* Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power, do that which is good, and thou ſhalt have praiſe of the ſame. Preaching of the Goſpel whereby men may be ſaved, and praying to God in the name of Chriſt are good works, and therefore rulers ought not to be a terrour to any man for theſe works.

7. We are taught and Commanded by our Lord Jeſus Chriſt to pray to the Lord to ſend forth labourers into his Vineyard, becauſe the harveſt is great, and the labourers are but few, *Then ſaid he to his diſciples, The harveſt truly is plentiful, but the labourers are but few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harveſt, that he will ſend forth labourers into his harveſt.* To pray for labourers, and when God hath ſent them forth to moleſt and trouble them for labouring is to contradict our prayers. Let the Ignorance, Atheiſm, Profaneneſs, the growth of Errour, and the ſmall number of Preachers that are found in the Faith, and of an holy converſation, be conſidered and laid to heart, and it will evidently appear; that there is great need of prayer for more Labourers, and of encouraging thoſe that are ſent forth, and of not ſuppreſſing any that are faithful, peaceable, and diligent in the Work of the Lord.

Obj. 1. If it be replied. Theſe informers accuſe theſe Miniſters, that they keep ſeditious Conventicles, and are ready to give oath of it, and as ſuch we are obliged by the Law to ſuppreſs them.

An. 1. Rulers ought to be wiſe as an Angel of God, to diſcern good from evil. *2. Sam. 14, 17. As an Angel of God, ſo is my Lord the King to diſcern good and bad.* And that is no hard matter in the Noon day of the Goſpel to diſtinguiſh between Religion and ſedition. When *Job* was a Ruler among his People, he was diligent to ſearch out the truth of all cauſes that came before him; and when he found any Wicked man oppreſſing the righteous, he was ſo far from rewarding him, that he plucked the Spoil out of his Teeth, and if he held it faſt and would not let it go, he break his

Jaws rather than suffer him to hold his Spoils. *Job 29. 16, 17. The Cause which I knew not I searched out; I break the Jaws of the wicked, and pulled the Spill out of his Teeth.*

2. These Ministers, as was hinted before, do abhor seditious Conventicles and are falsely accused by these Informers, and Magistrates should be slow to believe their false accusations; and not proceed to Act against them till they have searched into the truth of these informations, and that for several reasons, as 1. The great enmity that is in the heart of the Wicked against Righteous men, which makes them eager to do them all the Mischief they can. The Scripture speaks so frequently and so fully of this, that I shall need to say the less. *Prov. 4. 16. They sleep not except they have done Mischief, and their Sleep is taken away unless they cause some to fall. Ps. 37. 19, 32. The Wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his Teeth. The Wicked watcheth the Righteous and seeketh to slay him.* 2. They are under a temptation of gain; and the Love of Money is the Root of all evil, and therefore it is no wonder if they prove false accusers of them against whom they have a great enmity, and by accusing of whom they make a great advantage. 3. The rule that is given to Magistrates in the word of God, is not to proceed to Punishment upon reports till they have made diligent search, and have certain proof of the truth of the fact. *Deut. 13. 13, 14, 15. If thou shalt hear say — Then shalt thou enquire, and make search and ask diligently; and behold if it be truth, and the thing certain that such abomination is wrought among you.*

3. These Ministers and those that assemble with them are oftentimes judged, and sentence passed upon them for to take away their Goods, before they have been heard, or had their accusers Face to Face; yea sometimes before they know who it is that hath accused them; and this seemeth to me to be against the Light and Law of Nature: which teacheth that a man ought not to be condemned till he hath had his accusers face to face, and hath had Licence to answer for himself. The Romans had no other Light to regulate them in their judicial proceedings, but the Light of Nature; yet they observed this Rule, not to pass sentence upon a man, till he had his accusers face to face, and had liberty to answer for himself. *Act. 15. 16. It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to dy, before he that is accused, hath the accusers face to face, and have Liberty to answer for himself, concerning the Crime laid against him.* If the Romans, which were Heathens, how much more should Christian Magistrates, forbear condemning any man, till he hath seen his accusers, heard his accusation, and been Permitted to make his own defence. The name of *Pilar* is odious in the Christian World; and will be to all generations, for Condemning our Lord Jesus Christ to be put to Death, yet he shewed so much justice in his carriage, he would not give sentence against him, till he had examined him, and his accusers, and had heard what he could say for himself. *Luk. 23. 13. And Pilar when he had called together the chief Priests and the Rulers and the People said unto them, ye have brought this man unto me as one that perverteth the People; and behold I having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things wherof you accuse him.* Neither the hainousness of the Crime objected against Christ, as Blaspheming, going about to make himself a King, Perverting

verting the People, &c. Nor the greatness or multitude of his accusers, (the chief Priests, Rulers, Elders, and the People were combined together) nor the importuness of his adversaries, 'who Thirsted after his Blood, and cryed out with one consent, Crucify him, Crucify him, could prevail with Pilat, to give sentence against Christ, till he had examined him in the presence of his accusers. Let it not be said that any Christian Magistrates come short of the justice Pilat shewed, or pretended to shew, who was the Condemner of Christ, That such inconsiderable Persons as these Informers should prevail with them, to Condemn men fearing God, and give out Warrants to destrain their goods, without examining them before their accusers, and hearing what they are able to say for themselves.

4. As for the pretence of the Informers, that these men transgress the Act made to prevent seditious Conventicles, I have answered that Plea, chap. 3. Plea. 5. whither I refer the Reader. Where I have proved, that the Meetings of these Ministers called Nonconformists, are no transgression of that Act, according to that Charitable interpretation that may be put upon it. And I quoted a Passage out of Dr. *Jeremiah Taylour*, concerning the interpretation of Laws, which was this, *All Laws do infinitely decline all harsh sense, and are ambitious of gentle benign interpretations.* Which if allowed as true in the interpretation of this Law, in my judgment the Meeting of these men are not Punishable by that Law; because those Meetings that are Punishable by that Law, must be in other manner than according to the Liturgy, and the practice of the Church of England, which though the Informers Swear, (because they do either not understand or not fear an Oath) yet they will not be able to prove. For they must be able to prove, that they are in other manner than according to the holy Scripture: (which they cannot do) because, 1. The holy Scriptures which are read for the first and second Lesson, are a great part of The Liturgy of the Church of England, and therefore what Meetings are not in other manner, than is allowed by those Portions of Scripture prescribed to be read by the Liturgy, are not in other manner than according to the Liturgy. 2. If these informers will contend and Swear, That though these meetings be not in other manner than according to the holy Scriptures; yet they are in other manner than according to the Liturgy, this would set the Liturgy and the Scripture at variance, and such a conclusion would be drawn from hence as might make them Punishable for depraving the Liturgy of the Church of England. If it be said these meetings are in other Manner than according to the Scripture. These Ministers desire no further favour than to argue this case with the Informers in the presence of the Magistrates. And if they cannot justify whatever they do out of the Word of God, they will contentedly suffer what these Magistrates shall see meet to inflict upon them.

And if all Laws do infinitely decline all harsh senses, I would appeal to all Sober men. whether this be not an harsh sense to interpret a Law made to suppress seditious Conventicles, in such a sense as to Punish men for performing Religious Duties? And whether this be not an harsh sense to interpret, those Meetings that are not in other manner than according to the Holy Scriptures, to be in other manner than according to the Liturgy of the Church of England? Suppose some pretenders to Religion have Plotted Insurrections

insurrections under a colour of religious exercises (such practices and principles I abhor as much as other men, I speak not one word in their behalf) yet this doth not take off the harshness of the interpretation; so to interpret a Law made to prevent sedition and insurrection, as to Punish such as meet for no other end but to glorify God, and work out their own salvation. If a strict Law were made to prevent Drunkenness, and because many have made themselves drunk with Wine or Strong drink; to interpret this Law, so as to Punish a man that hath a weakly Stomach, and drinks Wine moderately to help his digestion, or to Punish a man that goeth to the Tavern upon weighty Business; would be judged a harsh interpretation of the Law, to Punish sober men for the use of that which others have abused: so here, because some have abused private Meetings, to interpret a Law against seditious Meetings; so as to Punish those that use Meetings in an holy and Religious manner, seems to me an harsh interpretation of the Law.

Obj. 2. It may be some will say, we cannot, we dare not say to the contrary, but many of the Non-conformists are righteous and peaceable men, and we are not able to prove their Meetings are in other manner than according to the Holy Scriptures; and if we could avoid it, we would not molest these men or their Meetings; for it is against our Consciences to break them up, or to fine them: But these Informers are busy men, and they may possibly make us lose an hundred pounds, if we do not answer their desire in disturbing these Meetings, and fining those that are present at them. If it were not that we feared the loss of an hundred pounds, we would not meddle with these men and their Meetings.

Ans. 1. I have not heard of any Magistrate that hath suffered on this account, and if any Informer should arise to that Impudence, as to Sue any Magistrate, for not molesting these Men or their Meetings, I have more charitable thoughts of the Law, and of those that Execute them, than to think that any Magistrate should be Fined for not punishing those Men, against whom nothing of Sedition can be proved, nor any thing else, but that they meet together to pray to God, in the Name of Christ, for things agreeable to his Will, and to Preach and hear his holy Word.

2. To such as are under a Temptation of acting contrary to their Consciences, for fear of the loss of an hundred pounds; I may say as the Prophet said to Amaziab, when he asked him, *But what shall we do for the hundred Talents?* And the man of God answered, *The Lord is able to give thee much more than this,* 2 Chron. 25. 9. An hundred Talents is more than an hundred pounds; and if God could make up the loss of an hundred Talents to Amaziab, is he not able to give you much more than an hundred pounds. *The blessing of the Lord maketh Rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it,* Prov. 10. 12. The Lord can by his blessing make up your loss by prospering you in your callings, by casting an Inheritance upon you by the death of Friends, by keeping off expensive sicknesses, or by giving it to your Posterity, and several other ways.

3. If for saving an hundred pounds you will sin against God, and your own Consciences; God can take away more than that suddenly from you: Either by Fire, or by losses at Sea, or decay of Trade, or miscarrying of Debtors, or by expensive sicknesses, or giving you riotous Children, or leaving
ing

ing you fall into the hand of the Extortioner, or divers other ways. Or else God can send such trouble upon your Consciences, that your Estate shall do you no good, but you shall wish an hundred times, that you had suffered the loss of all that you have, rather than to have sinned against your Conscience. What good did *Francis Spira* his estate do him, after he had sinned against his Conscience to preserve his Estate.

4. There are more material questions to be asked in this Case, than what you should do to prevent the loss of an hundred pounds; as, What you should do to keep a good Conscience? For a good Conscience is more worth than all the world. What you should do that you may not sin against God? For a man should choose the greatest loss before the least sin. What account you shall be able to give of your actions at the day of Judgment? For that is the rule we are to walk by; *So speak ye, and so do ye, as they that shall be judged by the Law of Liberty, Jam. 2. 12.* We should undergo any loss, rather than do any action, which we cannot give an account of at the day of judgment.

5. Give me leave to put you in mind of *Balaam*, what he said, what he did, and what befel him, when he was sent for to curse *Israel*; and to hint something from his example in reference to the Informers that come to you to break up the Assemblies of these men. 1. *Balaam* was sent for by a King, and the Messengers that came on the Errand of *Balack* King of *Moab*, to invite *Balaam* to Curse *Israel*, were Honourable Persons, the Princes of *Moab*: yet he would not go with them till he had consulted with God, whether it were his will that he should go with these men; and he made them tarry a Night before he gave them their answer; and then understanding that it was the will of God that he should not go, he resolved not to go with them, though sent for by a King. *Num. 22. 7, 8, 12, 13, 14.* 2. The Princes of *Moab* brought great rewards to give to *Balaam*, v. 9. they made him great profers, and Promises, if he would go with them, v. 16, 17, *Thus saith Balaam: Let nothing I pray thee hinder thee from coming unto me; for I will promote thee to great Honour, and I will do whatsoever thou shalt unto me. Come therefore I pray thee; and Curse me this People;* Here are great intreaties in the name of a King. Come I pray thee. Let nothing I pray thee hinder thee from coming. And great promises of great Promotion, and giving all that he would ask. But what said *Balaam* till God gave him leave, they could not get him to go: though *Balack* would have given him his House (and no doubt but *Balack*'s house was a large one fit for a King) as full of Silver and Gold, as it could hold, v. 18. And *Balaam* answered the Servants of *Balack*: *If Balack would give me his house full of Silver and Gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God to do more or less.* 3. When *Balaam* was prevailed with to go, thinking he had got Leave from God, the Angel of God met him, holding a drawn Sword in his hand and would have slain him, had not the Ass espied the Angel and turned out of the way, v. 22-23, 32, 33. 4. When *Balaam* did go to *Balack*, he did not Curse *Israel* at all, but blessed them, though he angered *Balack*, and lost all his preferments thereby, *Num. 24. 10, 15.* And *Balack*'s anger was kindled against *Balaam*, and he smote his hands together, and said, *I called thee to curse mine enemies; and behold, thou hast altogether blessed them these three times, therefore now flee to thy place; I thought to promote thee to great Honour, but the Lord hath kept thee back from honour.* These things did *Balaam*, when he was sent for to curse *Israel*. Here let it be considered, 1. Whether our righ-

counsellors must not exceed the righteousness of *Balaam*, if we enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, seeing he lived and died a South-sayer, *Josh* 13. 22. And though he had the gift of Prophecy, he is stiled a mad Prophet, and branded with loving the ways of unrighteousness. 2. Whether the people of God in these days be not as dear to him as the people of *Israel* were of old? 3. Whether *malè facere* be not as bad as *malè dicere*? whether to afflict and hurt in deeds, be not as bad as to hurt in words; seeing the curse castless shall not come, *Prov* 26. 2. And sure there is no Divination against *Jacob*, nor Inhabitant against *Israel*. These things premised, I would crave leave to advise you. 1. When these Informers come to you to punish the Ministers of the Gospel for Preaching Gods Word, or to break up their Meetings, you should do well to ask Counsel of God, whether it be his will you should go with these men, and do what they would have you do. and make them wait your leisure till you be satisfied in your Conscience of the lawfulness thereof. *Balaam* did thus, though he was sent for by a King; though Princes came to him, he would not go till he had advised with God. Those Men that come to you are usually mean and beggarly persons; and therefore they may well vary your leisure. I have wondered at the haste of some men, who, as is reported, have left all, yea, the service of God, to follow these men. This is far short of *Balaam*. 2. If you be not satisfied that it is the Will of God that you should go with these men; whatever entreaties they use, whatever arguments they lay before you go not with them. *Balaam* refused to go with the Princes of *Moab*, though entreated, though profer'd great rewards, when it was against the Will of God. These men bring no reward, but shame and reproach, and the ill will of your neighbours, and yet how forward are many to go with them. 3. If upon serious consideration you think you may lawfully go with these men, take heed you be not deceived, and take heed to your spirits, that you go with a right Spirit. *Balaam* thought he had gotten leave from God to go with *Balack's* messengers, he thought he had good warrant to go, for God had said, *If the men come to call thee, rise up and go with them*. Which some conceive to be spoken ironically, others by way of Indignation; seeing he had tempted God by coming again to enquire of his going; when he knew it was expressly against his mind; He spake in anger, and said, Rise up and go with them. Or if he had leave, there was covetousness, or malice, or some other evil in his heart; whether he had a Warrant to go or not, I do not now enquire, but this is certain God was angry with him for going, *Numb* 22. 22. Gods anger was kindled against him, because he went. And he was in danger to be slain by the Angel that stood in the way.

4. If you think your selves obliged by virtue of the Law to go along with these Informers, if you find nothing of Sedition in the Assembly to which they carry you; if you find them met in a peaceable manner, Preaching sound Doctrine, praying for things agreeable to the Will of God; instead of cursing them, or punishing them, leave your blessing upon them, and say, *The blessing of the Lord be upon you*, and punish these Informers as false accusers. When *Balaam* went to *Balack* instead of cursing *Israel*, he blessed them, though he angered *Balack* thereby; and lost great honours and promotions. They that will rather curse an *Israelite*, than run the hazard of small losses, of losing their dignities and promotions, come short of *Balaam*, who yet fell short of eternal life.

Obj. 3. We

Obj. 3. We have yet one scruple more about these men, and these Meetings, if we could get over that, we would not molest them, and it is this, we shall not be accounted the Kings friends, if we do not suppress these Men, but shall be accounted friends and favourers of Phanaticks; If it were not for this, we would not meddle with them.

Ans. 1. This is a strong temptation upon some men to do irregular things, for fear they should not be esteemed the Kings friends; as we may see in the case of *Pilat*; he was very loth to have meddled with Christ when the Jews brought him. He would know what Crime they had to lay to his charge before he would do ought against him, *Joh. 18. 29. What accusation have ye brought against this man?* And when they pretended he was a Malefactor, *Pilat* was very desirous to have been excused from meddling in the case, *vers. 31. Take ye him, and judge him according to your Law.* And when they urged him, he vindicated Christ, *vers. 32. I find in him no fault at all.* And when they pressed hard upon him to crucify Christ, he would have put them off again, and told them, he could find no fault in him, *Chap. 19. v. 6. They cried out saying, Crucify him, Crucify him. Pilat saith unto them, Take ye him and Crucify him: for I find no fault in him.* Then they plead their Law, that by their Law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God, *vers. 7.* Upon hearing this, that it was given out, that he was the Son of God, he was the more afraid to give sentence against him, and sought which way to release him, *vers. 8. 9, 12.* Then they used this device; they tell *Pilat* he should not be looked upon as *Cesars* friend if he let Christ go. *If thou let this man go, thou art not Cesars Friend.* And though he had withstood the reasonings and importunities of the Jews hitherto; the hearing of this, that he should not be *Cesars* Friend, prevailed with him, contrary to his judgment and Conscience, to deliver up Christ to be Crucified, *v. 12, 13, 16. If thou let this man go, thou art not Cesars Friend. When therefore Pilat heard this saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sate down in the judgment seat. Then delivered he him to be Crucified.*

If things be duly estimated, these Informers that stir up Magistrates to Punish the Kings Subjects, for praying and Preaching, and those that take in with them will appear to be none of the Kings Friends; but rather his adversaries. For, 1. They that misuse Gods Ministers, bring Gods Wrath upon the Kingdom, as hath been before proved, from, *2 Chr. 36. 16. They mocked the Messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his Prophets, until the Wrath of the Lord arose against his People, till there was no Remedy.* Is not this misusing the Lords Prophets and Messengers, when they are Punished for Preaching Gods Word? and whether are they to be reckoned the Kings Friends or Enemies that bring the Wrath of God upon his Kingdom? 2. *David* counted those his Adversaries that prompted him to Punish *Shimei*, when he was settled upon his Throne in Peace, and yet *Shimei* had cursed *David* to his Face in the day of his distress. *2 Sam. 19. 21, 22. And Abishai the Son of Neriab said, shall not Shimei be put to Death for this, because he cursed the Lords anointed. And David said, what have I to do with you, ye Sons of Neriab, that ye should this day be adversaries unto me? shall there any man be put to Death this day in Israel; for do I not know that I am this day King in Israel.* These men pray for the King and Kingdoms welfare. And if *David* accounted the Sons of *Neriab* his adversaries, for stirring him up to destroy

Shimei, who had cursed him, because he had humbled himself, may we not count these Informers the Kings Enemies that seek the Destruction of these men, who pray to God both in their Families and Assemblies to bless the King, and Preach obedience to the King in all lawful things: 3. *In the multitude of People is the Kings honour, but in the want of People is the Kings destruction.* Prov. 14. 28. And therefore to Suppress, Impoverish, to force to flee out of the Nation so great a Part of the Kings Subjects as the Nonconformists are, would be a diminishing of the People, and so a diminution of the Kings Honour and Safety.

3. It's a Calumny raised by the adversaries of the Nonconformists, to excite the Magistrates against them; that they shall not be esteemed the Kings Friends if they do not suppress them. For our Sovereign Lord the King hath been graciously pleased in several of his Declarations, to testify unto his Kingdom, that he hath a kindness for his Nonconforming Subjects as well as the rest of his Subjects. And besides these, there may be other demonstrations given that these Magistrates are true and real Friends to the King, who do shelter the Nonconformists from the fury of the Informers, and keep them from being persecuted for righteousness sake. As, 1. They are the Kings true and real Friends that uphold his throne and endeavour to establish his Throne for ever; and this they do that deliver the oppressed, and shew mercy to such as are under affliction. *Prov. 29. 14. The King that faithfully judgeth the Poor, his Throne shall be established for ever.* *Prov. 20. 28. Mercy and truth preserve the King, and his Throne is upholden by Mercy.* Who sheweth mercy he that Punisheth Men for Praying, and Preaching, or he that Sparerh them? 2. They are the Kings Friends that bring down the blessing of God upon the Kingdom, and cause him to wax great, and to be so feared by the Neighbour Nations that they make no War with him. And this they do who encourage the faithful Preachers and Preaching of the word of God. When the Preaching of the Word of God was encouraged in *Jehoshaphats* days; there were such eminent Blessings came upon him, and his Kingdom, that he waxed great exceedingly, and was feared of all the Lands round about, and none of them durst make War with him. *2 Chr. 17. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12. And with them he sent Levites and Priests, and they taught in Judah, and had the book of the Law of the Lord with them, and went about through all the Cities of Judah, and taught the people, and the fear of the Lord fell upon all the Kingdoms of the Lands that were round about Judah; so that they made no War against Jehoshaphat. And also some of the Philistines brought Jehoshaphat Presents, and Tribute Silver. The Arabians brought him Flocks. And Jehoshaphat waxed great exceedingly.*

F I N I S.

ERRATA'S.

Page 14. l. 12. *οικανδαιλοι*. p. 29. l. 22. we think we do well. p. 40. l. 4. 1 *Sam.* 12. 23. & l. 6. way. p. 42. l. 18. 2 *Kings* 10. 1. &c. p. 55. l. 17. belly & l. 46. 2 *Es.* *Joh.* v. p. 56. l. 20. wallow. p. 75. l. 33. overthrow, & l. 47. will ye. p. 77. l. 5. spake, l. last r. brake. p. 78. l. 2. brake.

Upon y^e Reverend Dr. M^r M^r M^r

Two words (but ah too hard!) Agent Com
Had made this stone A stately Monument
Then it had run with a more lofty stile
The Dean of Rochester lyes in this gle:
May padventure high? — Here lyes Dea
A Learned, Reverend, & Mitred Head.
Now a small Character must serve, & turn,
So good lyes hidden in an Earthen Urn.
Here lyes a Hark? — who in Jesus dyd,
With six deare Children sleeping by his side
Here rests a great Divine, A learned Man
Smart Disputant, well Read Historian
Accurate Text-man, Orthodox avowd,
If our Church-Articles may be allowd;
severe of Brow, but in Discourse serene,
whose Tongue could say well All his Mind did
Heavens inquir'd not How the time did pass
Nor listned to y^e Clock, nor lookt at Glasse,
Tidious He could not be, though much he re
The Warp & Woofe were both so fine a thre
Black Envy lookt a squint, gnasht, swell'd, & sw
To see so many Coaches Thro'g His doore;
His Sentences to many a Noble Eare
were Rich? Then y^e Jewels they did weare.
His printed Books Cyrtly they were so few
Ten times prised, yet appeared new
When His bright Soul entred the blessed pla
off? the smiles of his Great Masters face.

UMI
Met hinks y^e see, these two Hypocrites Rise
St James & Jude, & with Delighted Eyes
Behold, Embrace, well com with heavenly Greet
their Scholler— seating Him at their own fest
then by Appointment of y^e Throne, & Votes
That High— House approv'd, & prais'd his Notes
faithfully & fruitfully annex
to their Epistles, & y^e Sacred Text.

* Then glorious David from his Sunlike Throne
Bedeckt with Stars & many p^{re}cious stone
Wellcom'd the St into the heavenly Quire
Thanking Him for his Lessons on his Lyre.
Moving An Order wth not one withstood
They Might be publish'd for y^e Churches Good.
It was Resolv'd— Heaven would be very kind
His poore Wife & Children left behind,
Absence should not make them fare y^e worse
As Allsufficiency should be their purse,
As Providence their All— and All This done
Without their Fathers Int^{er}cession.

'Twas lastly Voted— His Remains Below
Should to their Dust with Love & Honour goe
And that a Wise Embalm^r make & shed
A box of p^{re}cious Ointment on his Head;
his Sermon tis— Truth mixt with Eloquence
adorn'd wth modesty & innocence.
Added to w^{ch} this Ink gives not more Grace
Then Black spots sett upon A Lovely Face.

Finis.

Upon y^e Death of y^e Reverend D^r Mann
And y^e Reported Death of y^e most Rever
The Arch-Bp. of Cant^y the same time
To the Angry Brethren — (Armen Ireni)

Not yet Agree (shame on us All!) Not yet?
Can & the only force us to forgett
What y^e pacifick Saver should have done?
And y^e next Best Act of Oblivion?
Now blest be Ch: y^e second, Best of Kings,
The wisest judge of p^{er}sons & of things;
His Healing Hand (at first) had curd our
so perfectly, there had remain'd no scars:
As Moses took the golden Calfe Away
Wch Aaron had sett up to make A Bray.
That Moses also by Divine Decree
One season fixt for Grace & Amnestie.
The High-Priests Death gave generall Release,
All persecution of y^e Law did cease,
The Refuge, Cityes sent Men home in peace
May our meek Moses that blest Law renew
Be each Gain-sayer viler then a Jew.
But if A gracious King can't have it don
King Death will make a comp^{er}hension:
That Great peace-Maker, (yet our comon foe)
Will Quish us wheth^r we will or noe,
That Equall Umpire soon will end y^e stirr
Betwixt y^e Prelate & y^e Presbyter:
All's one to him whith^r y^e Honourall
March to y^e Temple, or A comon Hall;
And at y^e Buriall he Amen will cry,
By Directory, or the Liturgie.
In his Long-Lane the Cloak & Casuck me
In his winding-sh

jumbled in his chek-bagg, & so laid by.
Hearts, Diamonds, & Clubs their Tricks may play
But his Spade Trumps, & carries All away.
He both our friendly & our fierce Debates,
With one word [finis] fully terminates.
Tis his Deteminacon ends y^e stickle
Twixt Convocaon & Conventicle;
What naked Truth Attempted, but in Vain;
Naked & shameles Death will soon obtain;
His Hand y^e sacred Brest-plate will unlace,
And snatch y^e secret Urin from his place:
The precious stones before Him change their Hue,
And All y^e holy Lamps burne pale & Blue.
He through y^e Ephod stabs y^e Guarded Breasts
The Shoulders & their humerall Arrests.

Whith^r y^e Hurraill Guests doe sipp, or Quaffe,
Whith^r y^e Executour doth weep or laugh;
Whith^r the Scutcheons smutty owe or trim,
Whith^r A Turfe or Marble covers Him;
What work y^e preach^r maketh with his Name
Symony-Dawb, or Sacriledge-Defame,
(Woe & alah) whith^r his loaded & Herse
Bears Parigyrick or Satyrick Verse;
Whith^r y^e downe Bayes, or dull, whith^r I
shall serve, or Mischief Him with Poetry;
Bishop & presbyt^r must take their Lott,
Both alike unconcern'd, Regard it not.
Oh Mighty Death! let Heav^r of Sin & Thre
Make Mortall Men their Mortall Fends Agre

Once more; of ~~dragad~~ dragady & Hurraills faile,
Let Comady, & Nuptiall News prevails.
Charles & the United Princes Combine,
And gaye two Princes of the Royall Line.

Thrice happy Match Made without leave
A Royall Paire of Protestants, in whom
An hopefull seedsplot laid for Christend
Mary & William: the old order vary,
More lucky then a Phillip & a Mary.
now if You like y^e Match, & High-Borne Man,
(Prince of a State that's presbyterian)
if what a wise King, Duke & Councell doe,
(The Kingdoms joy) please but y^e Clergy too
then lets shake hands & clasp them; let y^e son
of well tun'd Bells our forme ganglings dr
Let Hymens torches kindle piles of Fire
In streets & hearts, & Burn up all our ire;
And at this Wedding, May the Grace Divin
Curn all our bitter Waters into Wine.

But if Heaven-borne ire cannot swage
Hell-bred Erinnyes Fury, & black Rage;
if Josephs tears, & counsaile (see I pray
if you're Brethren) that yee fall not out by th
May not prevail, yet give us leave to dye,
Be not unkind (As Edom) to deny
poore Brethren passage by y^e common way,
We will not spoile, but for our wat^r pay;
And eat our own Bread; will not wrong a M
But quietly pass on to Canaan.
nor let our Numbers y^e Molest p^rce,
Our Sinns (yee need not) soon will make us
Please to reach our Conscience as too m
Forgive us that fault weh did move y^e
Had we Conformed, then Turn:coats we had
if we turn out, then Schismaticks, & sin.
Had we comply'd; the Free Hold still wa
Had we both (channily) been Yours

Churchings & Truementy y^e High-Days Fare;
Nor Chamlet Caltsucks then; nor silken Zones
y^e Ladys now, had then been Country JOANES.
Give Losers leave to speak, tis All we crave
stop not Our Mouths till in Our silent Grave.
When we come there, then tread us und^r Foot,
And pijs upon us too (who please to do st;)
It will not stain us, Onely wash y^e Stone
And make more legible th^e Inscription.

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ones
1725.

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* He preached upon y^e whole 119 Ps. with great
labour & diligence. this y^e D^r here hints

* these were to have
been printed at y^e end of D^r
with his sermon.